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Prince says he has 'no intention' of taking a wife but Diana stays silent on subject of divorce

Charles: I want to be King

STEVE BOGGAN
LOUISE JURY
and JAMES CUSICK

The Prince of Wales gave the nearest signal to date that he intends to become King by announcing yesterday that he would not re-marry after his anticipated divorce from Princess Diana.

Ending speculation that the Royal Family might skip a generation because of Prince Charles's public marriage humiliations, Buckingham Palace announced that he had "no intention" of taking a wife, a prospect that could have led to a rift between the monarchy and the Church of England.

The announcement came in the wake of yesterday's disclosure that the Queen had written to the Prince and Princess of Wales on Monday urging them to divorce as soon as possible. It is understood that the ill-feeling generated by the Princess's appearance on BBC's *Panorama* programme last month was further inflamed by her decision on Sunday not to join the rest of the Royal Family for Christmas celebrations at Sandringham.

Yesterday, amid tight security on the royal estate, trusted technicians and cameramen filmed the Queen's speech in preparation for Monday's broadcast. Anxiety over leaks has resulted in it being recorded just four days in advance.

The Prince has told the Queen that he agrees a divorce is necessary but there was no word yesterday from the Princess on whether she would give her consent.

If she did not, the Prince would have to wait five years from the date of their separation in November 1992, to petition for divorce.

A friend of the Princess said that while she would not want to "put a spanner in the works" indefinitely, it might take six months for her to agree the terms of a divorce.

While she did not want to put herself at odds with the Queen, she would not go out of her way

to help the Prince of Wales either.

One friend said that £500,000 a year - about the annual cost of financing a junior ministerial post - was not an unreasonable figure to seek, given the fact that she would almost certainly have to run a private office, provide transport and a wardrobe estimated to cost not less than around £100,000 a year.

The Palace's announcement ended speculation over the possibility of the Prince marrying Camilla Parker Bowles, with whom he has admitted committing adultery, in the near future. A spokesman told the



Born to be King: Charles at his investiture as Prince of Wales in 1969

Press Association: "The Prince of Wales has no intention of re-marrying. This has been the subject of great speculation and we are now making clear the Prince's position."

It was not clear, however, whether the Prince's decision was final. One source said that it was not possible to say whether, at the age of 47, the Prince was prepared to rule out marriage for the rest of his life.

The Church of England and constitutional experts confirmed that divorce would have no constitutional impact. The

Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, declined to comment yesterday, but he has said in the past that he did not see any problem with the Prince divorcing, re-marrying and still becoming King.

However, some hard-line sections of the Church warned the Prince that they thought re-marriage would rule that out, and some warned him against continuing his relationship with Mrs Parker Bowles.

The Bishop of Wakefield, the Very Rev Nigel McCulloch, said: "If the Prince of Wales is divorced he can still be the supreme governor of the Church."

"If at some stage in the future he decided to re-marry then that would be a difficult issue because the regulations of the Church of England provide that re-marriage after divorce during the lifetime of a former partner involves a departure from the principles of the Church."

"To have a supreme governor who was departing from the principles of the Church would involve some considerable difficulties."

Political response was muted, concentrating mainly on sadness that the marriage should finally be coming to an end.

John Major refused to comment on the Queen's call for an early divorce, although a Downing Street spokesman said he backed it.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4's *The World at One*, the Labour leader, Tony Blair, said: "It is very sad for them. It is also the case that it is immensely difficult for them to work out their future path now."

"I think most people, myself included, would want to see, should a divorce take place, some role for Princess Diana and some chance for her to use her undoubted ability and esteem that she has in the interests of the country."

"She is a popular figure. She is held in very great esteem and it would be good to see her being able to perform some useful role for the country."



All set: Princes Harry and William arriving with the Princess of Wales at the Harbour Club in west London yesterday. Photograph: Alisdair Macdonald

Sandringham snub led the Queen to call for divorce

STEVE BOGGAN
and DONALD MACINTYRE

The Princess of Wales's decision not to spend Christmas at Sandringham infuriated the Queen, who decided within hours to call for a divorce, according to sources close to the Palace.

The Queen's anger was not simply in response to what was seen by many as a snub to the rest of the Royal Family but also the fact that the Princess had rejected the Queen's and the Prince of Wales's terms for her uncomfortable existence within the monarchy.

"Economically and financially, everything has been agreed," said one source. "But the sides cannot agree on Diana's role and her title. Her demands are too high and

whatever it is she wants, they are not prepared to give it."

It is understood this was behind the Princess's decision not to join the rest of the family for Christmas. "She didn't want to go while there were still things unsettled," said the source.

A friend of the Princess confirmed that cancellation of the Sandringham trip precipitated the Queen's action but he said the decision was based on suspicion that divorce moves were afoot. In particular, the Prime Minister's meeting with her on Wednesday night was arranged a week in advance. It is thought she may have believed John Major was planning to break some news to her and she did not want to be "ambushed" by the family at Christmas.

The Princess decided on Sun-

day not to go to Sandringham and telephoned her decision to the Palace. It is understood the Queen was deeply unhappy and within hours had prepared letters for the Prince and Princess which were delivered on Monday. The Queen expressed "anger and frustra-

tion" and urged a divorce as soon as possible. Soon afterwards, Prince Charles sent letters agreeing to the proposal.

The Queen's reaction was said by some to have been a "knee-jerk" response.

Harold Brooks-Baker, publisher of *Burke's Peerage*, said: "Everyone, including all the courtiers, were expecting an announcement before Christmas about the marriage of Prince Edward to Sophie Rhys-Jones. That would seem impossible after this and it does point to a snap decision by the Queen being responsible."

Divorce has seemed inevitable since the Princess's appearance on BBC TV's *Panorama* last month in which she confessed to an affair with the cavalry officer James Hewitt.

Media clampdown to recover 'royal mystique'

JOJO MOYES

The Royal Family is planning to restrict media access in a move to "recover the mystique" of the monarchy and regain credibility in the face of increasingly hostile public opinion. A source close to Buckingham Palace said the Queen was "pulling down the shutters", after deciding that the family had received far too much exposure.

After television interviews in which the Prince and Princess of Wales admitted adultery, the Queen is said to want fewer members of her family on display, and for their lives to be less open to press scrutiny.

An early indication of the new approach came with the announcement that the photographers and journalists allowed to cover the Royal Family at the



Christmas morning service at Sandringham had been halved from 40 to 20. A Palace spokeswoman refused to comment

IN BRIEF

Major visits Ireland
John Major delivered an upbeat assessment of the peace process in Belfast and Dublin but reproached the IRA for not decommissioning arms. Page 4

Abortion doctor cleared
A consultant who carried out an abortion while operating on a woman who was unaware she was pregnant was cleared of acting unlawfully. Page 5

160 die in plane crash
A US Boeing 757 crashed into a mountain in Colombia, killing 160 people. Page 9

Charlton quits
Jack Charlton resigned as manager of the Republic of Ireland football team. Page 24

Today's weather
Very mild in the South. Elsewhere it will be overcast with spells of rain. Page 24

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THE ROYAL DIVORCE

Church is saved from dilemma over remarriage

ANDREW BROWN
Religious Affairs Correspondent

Officially, the Church of England will have no difficulty coming to terms with a divorced king who would become its supreme governor. Unofficially, it is heaving a huge sigh of relief that the Prince of Wales appears to have renounced remarriage.

Though the Church of England recognises divorce, in common with almost all non-Roman Catholic churches, it has no formal mechanism for recognising second marriages.

As to the question of the constitutional or theological position of a king and supreme governor who has a recognised mistress, no one in any official position in the Church was offering any opinion yesterday.

A minority of conservative priests still doubt whether anyone who has admitted adultery should succeed to the throne. Dr David Holloway, one of the leaders of Reform, an evangelical pressure group opposed to women priests and homosexuals, said yesterday he did not know if he could take the oath of allegiance to a divorced man.

Every time an Anglican priest is promoted or transferred to a new parochial post, she or he says: "I do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to her majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors, according to law. So help me God."

"The difficult word there is faithful," said Dr Holloway. "That doesn't necessarily mean promising to do what you are

told. I think it refers to the Christian faith, and that, of course, brings in the whole question of the fitness of leadership. Of course there is forgiveness for divorce and marriage sin but certain behaviours preclude people from certain offices. If he gets divorced, he is unfit to be



Dr George Carey: 'monarch is the supreme governor'

supreme governor." However, when the question was first raised seriously, in 1992, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, declared that: "The Monarch is supreme governor... by virtue of being the sovereign. There is no other legal requirement." George I succeeded to the throne in 1714 despite being divorced.

In the twentieth century, the rules have been tighter. Edward VIII was forced to abdicate rather than marry his divorced mistress, Wallis Simpson. Cos-

mo Lang, then Archbishop of Canterbury, was an implacable opponent of that relationship.

Convocation, one of the precursors of the General Synod, denounced remarriage in church for people whose partners were still living in 1957, after the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Geoffrey Fisher, had intervened to prevent Princess Margaret from marrying the divorced Group Captain Peter Townsend.

This position was modified in the 1980s, so that now a priest who is convinced in conscience that he should marry a divorced couple may do so. But few do. The majority of couples marrying in church for the second time are given a service of blessing, which uses almost all the words of a traditional marriage service except those phrases which actually pronounce the couple married.

The Rev Victor Stock, Rector of St Mary-le-Bow in the City of London, said: "If the church is in the process of rethinking the way it deals with second marriage, then the Prince might benefit from it at some future date, but at the moment it would be absolutely wrong to change the church's regulations as they exist just for the sake of one man."

Anglican churches abroad, which are not established, tend to be looser in their marriage discipline. There are divorced bishops in the United States. The Church of Scotland, which is Presbyterian rather than Anglican, does remarry divorced people in church.



Home alone: The Prince of Wales being driven from Highgrove, his estate in Gloucestershire, yesterday

Photograph: Barry Batchelor

Final step could be quickly arranged

STEVE BOGGAN

A royal divorce could be arranged within a matter of weeks, assuming the financial and other arrangements have been agreed between the Prince and Princess.

They could apply for a "special procedure" divorce on the grounds that they had been separated for more than two years. The special procedure requires the consent of both parties but if that is forthcoming - which is likely - then the whole process is routine and does not

require any court appearances. Normally, a district judge sitting in a county court or, in central London, a district judge sitting in the principal registry of the Family Division of the High Court, has discretion to speed up the divorce process in special circumstances.

"The circumstances are not specified, but they would include the effect of publicity on any children," said Nigel Shepherd, chairman of the Solicitors' Family Law Association. "The divorce nisi can be granted very quickly, but there is normally a

six-week wait for the decree absolute. If a judge thought that delay would put children in an unwelcome spotlight, he could waive that period.

"It is unlikely, but if you had people working flat out and the goodwill of the court, you could theoretically finish the process in a week.

The welfare of Princes William, 13, and Harry, 11, is considered to have been in the forefront of the Queen's mind when she intervened in their parents' affairs. She is said to have been concerned about the

effect that the protracted "PR war" between the couple, and the lack of concrete decisions about their marital status, was having on the two boys.

The Princess is now likely to seek, and be granted, unlimited access to her two sons. At present the couple have equal access to their children.

But one of the factors that may have concentrated royal minds on a quick divorce is the impending introduction of the Family Law Bill - which would have required the Prince or Princess to attend an "inform-

mation" session with a group of complete strangers.

Under the Bill, which is expected to become law next year, they would have to wait a minimum of 13 months and attend the compulsory session.

"We have been opposed to the idea of this group session since it was first mooted and, ironically, we used to cite the ludicrous possibility of the royals having to do it," Mr Shepherd said. "They could have to sit down with their local plumber and builder, whoever was getting divorced at the time."

Support for Diana's public role

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Political Correspondent

Political opinion hardened yesterday in favour of a royal divorce, but senior MPs emphasised their strong backing for the Princess of Wales's plea to be given a defined future role in public life.

The Prime Minister, who was consulted before the Queen intervened, has been acting behind the scenes in discussions over the princess's future.

It is widely believed that the kind of "ambassadorial" role she is seeking would have to be preceded by her agreement to a divorce, although the Prime Minister kept firmly to the politician's convention of neutrality yesterday, saying he had nothing to add to Wednesday night's statement by the Palace.

"It's a matter that's being dealt with. I've nothing further to add on that," Mr Major said during yesterday's visit to

Northern Ireland. But Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, told ITN: "Obviously it's a very sad announcement but I think it had become inevitable in the circumstances and the Prime Minister told the Queen that he agreed with her judgement."

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, while avoiding advocating a divorce as such, firmly backed the idea of the princess being given a distinctive role in public life in the event of one.

"It is very sad for them personally and my sympathy is with them," Mr Blair said in a BBC radio 4 *World at One* interview.

"It's also the case that it's immensely difficult for them to work out their future path now. There are no immediate constitutional implications, that is true. But I think that most people, myself included, would like to see, should a divorce take

place, some role for Princess Diana and some change for her to use the ambassadorial abilities that she has in the interests of the country."

Sir David Steel, the Liberal Democrat elder statesman, said most people wanted the couple to get on with an amicable divorce and the Prince to end up as King and Diana to get a proper role in public life.

Mr Blair added: "These things are always difficult to work out but I'm sure that there will be a proper opportunity to discuss the kind of role she might have. I think that most people, myself included, would like to see such a role. She's an immensely popular figure. She's held in great esteem and it will be good to see her being able to perform some useful role for the country. I think there can be discussions about the nature of that role."

"It's not a matter of party politics at all. It's a matter of try-

ing to come to terms with what is a very sad and difficult situation for the Prince of Wales and Princess Diana and seeing how the best can be achieved for them, their family and obviously for the country as well."

James Hill, the MP for Southampton Test and chairman of the Conservative backbench constitutional affairs committee, said: "There is nothing in the constitution that says that the heir to the throne cannot have a mistress, and since the Prince has said he is not going to marry I believe this has clarified that aspect."

"The princess might have been inclined to dig her heels in had she thought that as soon as he had got his freedom he was going to marry the 'other woman'. So we are making progress."

"We have got to get her a responsible role in international affairs. There remains the question of a financial settlement,

her ability to see her sons at any time, and a grace and favour residence, at which point we will be heading towards calmer waters."

"I think the Queen was very wise to intervene at this stage, otherwise there would have been another two or three years of hankering. We could not have had a situation where the two households were conflicting forces."

Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, urged a speedy divorce, saying: "The end of a marriage is a very sad event. But it is now plain to all that, sadly, this marriage has ended. There is no point in prolonging the pretence."

"It is in the interests of both parties, their children and the public duties that they must perform that the situation is clarified by formalising the separation with a divorce as soon as this can practically be arranged."

LOUISE JURY and
STEVE BOGGAN

Details of the Queen's highly confidential letters to the Prince and Princess of Wales were deliberately leaked, sources said yesterday.

It is understood that a "functional" working for the Prince gave details to Stuart Higgins, the editor of the *Sun* newspaper which broke the story.

Mr Higgins refused to disclose his source for the world exclusive saying: "There's no point in you asking. I won't tell."

But Buckingham Palace's swift confirmation on Wednesday night of virtually every point revealed from the explosive correspondence appeared to confirm suspicions that the leak was



Yesterday's *Sun* front page

carefully calculated. "It came from Charles's side via a functional who has no particular allegiances to either party. One has to assume it was with Charles's permission," one source said.

At the House of Commons, the story was widely believed to have come from Whitehall.

That the details were given to the *Sun* was particularly interesting given Mr Higgins's very vocal support for the Princess after her *Panorama* interview.

Although both the Prince and Princess have used the media in their feud, she had little to gain from this disclosure as it appears to be precipitating the divorce she has opposed.

However, the Prince's camp was keen to distance itself from the leak. One insider said: "The *Sun* were attributing it to political sources. I really don't know how it emerged. One would like to think that the substance of the Queen's letters to her family might remain private."

Mistress edges towards the limelight



Camilla Parker Bowles: Met Prince Charles on polo field

LOUISE JURY

They met on a polo field in 1972 and his devotion to her has affected the rest of his life.

Prince Charles's affection for Camilla Parker Bowles - and their intermittent affairs - cast a shadow over his marriage which he and Diana were unable to cast off. As the Princess described in last month's *Panorama* interview: "There were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded."

While the Prince was making it clear yesterday that he had no intention of remarrying after the divorce, at the age of 47, no-one would rule out the possibility

that he could change his mind in the future.

Already, in recent months, there has been what some commentators regard as a careful campaign to soften public opposition toward the couple. Public appearances at the same event, which would have been unheard of only a year ago, are now taking place.

In October, both attended the 50th birthday party of old friend Lady Sarah Keswick at the Ritz where Mrs Parker Bowles dazzled onlookers in a glitzy black dress more akin to the Princess's style than the country mode she is best known for. Both the Prince and Mrs Parker Bowles,

who, at 48, is one year his elder, are keen members of the Duke of Beaufort's hunt in Gloucestershire. And she has been pictured on several occasions leaving Prince Charles's home at Highgrove since she was divorced from her husband, Brigadier Andrew Parker Bowles, earlier in the year.

She has never commented on the friendship which the Prince is said to value above all others. But her former brother-in-law, Richard Parker Bowles, said last month: "When it came to Prince Charles, Camilla always knew she held his heart."

Political opinion has been shifting gradually towards the

idea of the Prince marrying Mrs Parker Bowles. A *Sunday Times* poll of MPs last weekend found half of Labour Members and a quarter of Tories who responded believing the union should be allowed to take place.

Although yesterday speculation about the royal mistress becoming Queen was being firmly dismissed by the Palace, it is only one year since Prince Charles made his television confession to the affair which he had conducted on and off all the way through his married life.

The 'royalling of Camilla' - as it was described by one newspaper this month - could be only just beginning.

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February: Charles and Diana announce engagement. Diana began contracting bulimia, she threw herself down stairs at Sandringham. July: They marry.	June: Prince William born. Charles arranged for Diana to see a psychiatrist after she threw herself down stairs at Sandringham.	Charles and Diana have a triumphant first royal tour together in Australia. Palace dismisses rumours that Diana is suffering from an eating disorder.	September: Prince Harry born.	October: Charles and Diana give first - and only - joint interview since their engagement in a 45-minute chat at Kensington Palace with Sir Alastair Burnet.	Charles and Diana pay official visits to Japan and the Gulf States. Charles admits talking to plants in television tour of his Highgrove gardens.	Rumours of rift in marriage as Charles spends more than a Swiss avalanche month at Balmoral, away from wife and children.	March: Charles escapes death in security scare when 57-year-old man lunges towards her in Northumberland.	April: Diana involved in minor security scare when 57-year-old man lunges towards her in Northumberland.	May: Tensions show during Royal couple's visit to Hungary.	Reports that Charles and Diana have separate rooms during State visit to Czechoslovakia.	Andrew Morton's book Diana: The True Story published. August: Squidgygate tape scandal breaks. November: Camillagate tape of intimate conversation between Charles and Camilla. December: Royal separation announced.	December: Diana announces her withdrawal from public life and asks to be allowed to have a life away from the media.	June: Jonathan Dimbleby's documentary in which Charles admits adultery. October: Anna Pasternak's book tells of James Hewitt's alleged five-year affair with Diana.	August: Diana is linked with rugby captain Will Carling. November: Gives interview to Panorama.

Palace faces task of finding a role for 'queen of hearts'

LOUISE JURY and IAN MACKINNON

The Princess of Wales told the interviewer Martin Bashir that she wanted to be the "queen of people's hearts", but had given up hope of ever being queen. A royal divorce would settle the matter, according to Vernon Bogdanor, Reader in Government at Oxford University.

In his book *The Monarchy and Constitution* he said that the wife of the king automatically becomes queen. "A divorce between the Prince and Princess of Wales would prevent the Princess of Wales becoming queen, since she would no longer be the wife of the king." But as mother of the future monarch, she expects a role and a title to be found for her.

The present arguments are what these should be - with the Princess reputedly demanding more than her estranged husband is willing to offer. Buckingham Palace refused

to discuss the possibilities yesterday, but the Royal Family has wide powers over titles. Some sources suggested she would be likely to lose the honour of Her Royal Highness. But Dr Rodney Barker, of the London School of Economics, said: "One can speculate that the Palace could allow the use of the title Princess Diana."

The new job is proving as difficult as the title. In the weeks since her *Panorama* interview, the Princess has had talks with the Palace and the Prime Minister about her desire to be a roving ambassador for Britain. On Wednesday, just hours before the Queen's letters became public, John Major had a further meeting with the Princess at Kensington Palace.

Some members of the Government have expressed disquiet at the prospect of a loose cannon of a disaffected princess touring the world. Yet divorce could help resolve the fears by clarifying her position and lay-

ing down ground rules. Independence would also have the benefit of easing the pressure on her personal life. In recent months, she has complained to friends that it is impossible for her to enjoy amicable relations with any man without him coming under public scrutiny. A life in a new residence away from the stuffy confines of Kensington Palace would give her a freedom which has been impossible within the Royal Family.

Both sides deny there have been any talks between Prince Charles's lawyers at the "royal" firm Farrer & Co, and the Labour peer Lord Mishcon, acting for the Princess. But legal experts believe that she could be in line for a £15m, "clean-break" settlement which would provide her with a net annual income of £500,000.

The Duchy of Cornwall's assets are put at £90m, but despite this wealth it is thought unlikely Prince Charles would have sufficient capital to make a one-off

payment since he holds it in trust for the future Prince of Wales. The Queen, bearing in mind her "anger and frustration" over the continued, embarrassing public wrangling, might contribute to the settlement. She has done so twice in the past: in the case of Princess Margaret and in that of the divorce of the Princess Royal from Captain Mark Phillips.

Under the financial agreement already believed to have been reached, she could, on the other hand, make a maintenance claim on Prince Charles's income, which theoretically is about £3m after tax.

But as the Prince draws no money from the Civil List and meets the costs of carrying out his royal duties himself, that is reduced by about £1m. As the Princess has no income of her own, she could choose, like many divorcees, to make a claim against one-third of her husband's income - which would be in excess of £600,000.

JOJO MOYES

The Princess of Wales's announcement earlier this week that she would not be spending Christmas at Sandringham means she will not see her sons on Christmas Day, although it is her "turn" to have them.

Her private office would not say yesterday what she will do instead, describing it as a "purely private matter", although there has been speculation that she might spend some time visiting the sick or homeless.

Reports that she may spend it skiing in Vail, Colorado, has led to a tabloid frenzy, with editors telling photographers they can "name their price" for pictures of the Princess with Christopher Whalley, the latest man with whom they have linked her.

Although she is said to consider it "a massive wrench" not to be with her sons, the Princess was said to have been dreading Christmas. She has travelled to Sandringham on Christmas Eve

Sandringham refusal leads to speculation on Diana's plans



Sandringham, Norfolk: Scene of the family Christmas

for the past two years, but last year spent barely 20 hours there, describing even that short stay as "grizzly".

A spokeswoman for Buckingham Palace said all the Queen's immediate family would spend Christmas with her.

This is likely to include the Queen Mother, Prince Philip, Princess Margaret, Lord and Lady Linley, Lady Sarah Arm-

strong-Jones, the Princess Royal, her husband Tim Laurence and her children Peter and Zara. Prince Charles and Princess William and Prince Edward.

The Duchess of York will also be at Sandringham, although like last year she and Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie will stay on Wood Farm, joining the Queen for tea on Christmas Day.

There has been speculation that Camilla Parker Bowles, who is now a regular visitor to Prince Charles's estate, Highgrove, would be spending Christmas at Sandringham. But more recent reports suggest that she will be spending it with her ex-husband Andrew and their children, Tom and Laura.

Christmas at Sandringham has a strict routine. As the Windsors follow the German tradition of opening presents on Christmas Eve, they are laid out in the hall and opened after tea at exactly 5pm.

On Christmas Day a full cooked breakfast is served at 8.30am and the Royals attend the service in the parish church. Lunch is served at exactly 1.15pm, and shortly before 3pm the Queen leads the way to the saloon so everyone can watch her Christmas message on television.

On Boxing Day after the traditional shoot the younger members begin to disperse - usually to see their non-royal parents.

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news

Police plan special log to combat rise in anti-gay attacks

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

Attacks and abuse against gay people, including harassment and verbal insults, will be recorded separately for the first time by the police next year, under a monitoring scheme being drawn up by chief constables.

The police are concerned that homophobic violence is increasing—a recent survey found that more than a third of gay men and women have been victims of abuse—and want greater reporting to find out the true scale of the problem.

Crimes which are motivated by anti-gay feelings are not distinguished in police records. Under the new system the police plan to monitor homophobic violence in a similar way to racially motivated attacks.

Gay rights campaigners yesterday welcomed the move. It follows criticism that many officers are hostile towards gays, making them reluctant to go to the police.

National guidelines are being compiled by the Association of Chief Police Officers' community and race relations sub-committee. They will define what constitutes a homophobic attack, which offences should be

recorded, and how officers should deal with them.

The report will be finished by February and is expected to be ratified by chief constables later in the year. The scheme, which has received widespread support, should be adopted by forces in England and Wales by the end of the year.

The draft scheme says that incidents should be recorded as anti-gay if the victim, the investigating police officers, or any other person involved, believe they were homophobic.

All offences that carry a jail sentence and all public order offences should automatically be recorded. The report also suggests that other less serious incidents, such as verbal abuse, harassment, jostling, anti-gay graffiti and literature should also be classified.

Inspector Stuart Brook, of West Yorkshire police, who are involved in devising the scheme, said: "We want to have anti-gay incidents monitored in a similar way to racial ones. At the moment we do not know the full scale of the problem."

"We hope the scheme will give the gay community the confidence to come to the police and will show that we are taking the matter seriously."

The Metropolitan Police have been running several pilot projects to monitor anti-gay incidents and similar schemes operate in Sussex and Greater Manchester. Such links have been useful in investigating murders such as those involving Colin Ireland, who was jailed in December 1993 for five murders of gay men.

A nationwide survey of 3,166 lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals, found that 35 per cent had suffered violent attacks at least once since 1990. About half of those aged under 18 had been victims.

Police are at present investigating the case of Tony Davies, 40, a father of two, who was found stabbed to death on Penryn Beach, Abergele, North Wales, a known gay haunt, on Monday. A man was being questioned last night.

Angela Mason, director of Stonewall, the national lesbian and gay campaign group, said monitoring would increase police awareness of homophobic violence. She added: "At first, there will probably be a relatively low level of reporting, but if the lesbian and gay community gain confidence the police will find the figures rise significantly."



Peace on earth: John Major at a Ballymena carol service yesterday. Photograph: Crispin Rodwell

Major in talks with Bruton on seasonal visit

DAVID MCKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

John Major yesterday visited Belfast and Dublin to deliver an upbeat assessment of the peace process and reproach Sinn Féin and the IRA for refusing to decommission weapons.

The Prime Minister's traditional pre-Christmas trip to Northern Ireland was augmented by a less usual visit to Dublin for talks with the Taoiseach, John Bruton, which are believed to have touched on decommissioning and the idea of a new Belfast assembly.

The British government is anxious to secure Irish support for an assembly which it believes may provide a way through the decommissioning impasse. The two northern nationalist parties, Sinn Féin and the Social Democratic and Labour Party, are, however, dead set against the idea.

In Belfast, Mr Major said huge progress had been made towards turning a ceasefire into a permanent peace. He said much more progress could be made next year. "It is an opportunity which we have not had for many years, which may not readily reappear, and I will do all I can to carry it forward."

Referring to recent killings of alleged drug-dealers in Belfast, Mr Major said that if the IRA

were responsible it was the clearest indication yet of the need for decommissioning. "If those talking about peace over the past 18 months or so are genuine in what they are saying, then they can prove that very clearly by proving that they wish to take the gun out of politics by doing it. I hope they will."

He said Sinn Féin and the IRA were the same organisation and attempts to separate the two were laughable. He added: "They are trying to maintain a fiction which I think most people in Northern Ireland will find laughable—that Sinn Féin and the IRA are wholly separate organisations. We know that not to be true and the people of Northern Ireland know that not to be true."

The Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, replied that British ministers had previously drawn a clear distinction between Sinn Féin and the IRA. He said the British reaction to the peace process was one of "negative begrudging and bad faith". Two soldiers jailed for life for the murder of a teenager shot dead in Belfast lost their appeal at the Northern Ireland High Court yesterday. The Scots Guardsmen James Fisher, 27, and Mark Wright, 22, had been sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of 18-year-old Peter McBride in September 1992.

IN BRIEF

Vauxhall offers to cut hours in radical three-year pay deal

Union leaders yesterday hailed a major breakthrough in their battle to cut working time in British industry when Vauxhall agreed to a one hour weekly reduction.

The motor company has proposed a 38 hour week as part of a three-year deal. Leaders of the company's 9,000 manual employees have agreed in return to a commitment to work 48 hours overtime a year to make up for the cut in hours.

Unions representing two million workers in the engineering industry who are campaigning for a 37 hour working week will be encouraged by the Vauxhall deal, which will be recommended in a ballot due to the car firm's Luton and Ellesmere Port plants in the New Year. In the first year of the proposed deal production staff will get a 4 per cent rise or £12.25, whichever is greater. In the succeeding two years their pay rise will match inflation.

Top civil servant's phone bugged

A police inquiry has been launched into the bugging of the home of a high-profile regional civil servant, it was disclosed. A bug was discovered wired into the telephone line at the home of Alastair Balls, chief executive of the Tyne & Wear Development Corporation, and his wife Beryl, chairwoman of the Northumbria Ambulance NHS Trust, in Wylam, Northumberland, after British Telecom was called about a fault on the line. The device, capable of transmitting several hundred yards, was the size of a pen.

Hackney Downs loses final battle

The 120-year-old Hackney Downs boys school in east London—the first school to be recommended for closure by a government-appointed "hit squad"—is doomed to close at the end of this month after the Court of Appeal rejected a final legal challenge by pupils and parents that the decision by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, Gillian Shephard, was unlawful.

Court orders closed store to reopen

Supermarket giants Argill Stores were ordered to reopen their Safeway store in the Hillsborough Shopping Centre, Sheffield, by the Court of Appeal, after closing it down in May this year in deliberate breach of a promise to keep it open to their landlords, the Co-Operative Insurance Society Ltd. The retail will cost an estimated £1m.

European conman agrees to extradition

A conman who posed as a Sicilian bishop, seduced two nuns and fathered children by them as he weaved a trail of debt and deception across Europe, agreed to be extradited to Austria to face allegations of deception and theft. Angelo Malanino, 46, signed a document before Bow Street magistrates, in London, waiving his right to contest extradition.

Girl, 15, burned in cooker accident

A teenage girl was critically ill after her clothing caught fire as she stood next to a gas cooker to get warm. Melanie Ellison, 15, of Wigan, Greater Manchester, who suffered burns to 60 per cent to her face and body, was saved by her brother Michael, 10, who ripped off her burning nylon jacket and put her in a bath.

Local plonk drowns stomach bugs

Tourists who are prone to a touch of "Spanish tummy" or "Montezuma's Revenge" could do worse than drink several glasses of the local red or white wine for protection, scientists say. Studies at West Virginia University, reported in the *British Medical Journal*, have found that wine has a more powerful anti-bacterial effect on foreign microbes than a prescribed drug.

Teenage girl gang in gun robbery

A gang of three teenage girls used an imitation gun to force their way into a house in Moseley, Birmingham, hitting a 15-year-old girl at home alone on the head with the weapon before ransacking the house and taking jewellery, clothing and CDs. The girl suffered was treated for head wounds.

Coach firm boss jailed for drugs trip

A coach firm boss caught trying to smuggle a consignment of drugs valued at £5.6m through Dover on a weekend trip returning from Amsterdam was jailed for 18 years at Maidstone Crown Court. Trevor Haskayne, 56, of Meols, Wirral, was found guilty of smuggling 400,000 Ecstasy tablets and 3.64 kilos of 90 per cent pure speed. His accomplice, John Moore, 23, of St Helens, admitted the charge and will be sentenced next month.

Lord arrested with cannabis chocolates

The son of the Earl of St Germans has been arrested after a raid on his Cornish home. Lord Jago Elliot, 29, was taken into custody after police executed a search warrant under the Misuse of Drugs Act and recovered £30,000 worth of cannabis, including cannabis chocolate truffles. Lord Jago was released on police bail.

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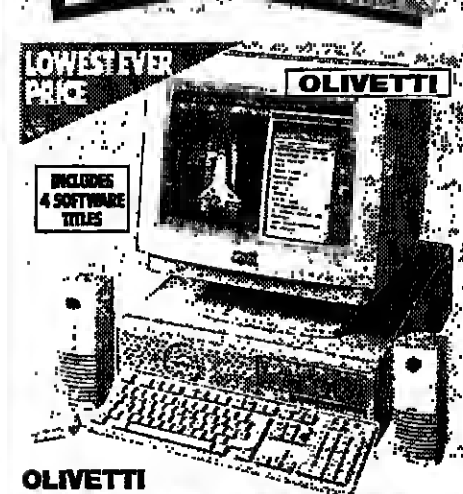
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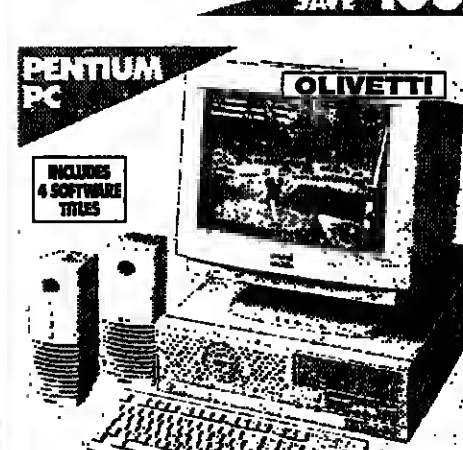
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Doctor who carried out abortion without consent is cleared

NICOLE VEASH

A senior hospital consultant who carried out an abortion while operating on a woman who was unaware she was pregnant was yesterday cleared of acting unlawfully.

Reginald Dixon, an obstetrician and gynaecologist, aborted the 11-week-old foetus without consent during a routine hysterectomy operation.

Mr Dixon, 58, was found not guilty of unlawfully procuring a miscarriage during an operation on Barbara Whiten, in March 1994 at the King's Mill Hospital, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire.

"I felt I had made a particularly hard and difficult decision which has turned out to be wrong, which I very much regret," he said.

Mr Justice McCullough said Mr Dixon, who is regarded as an eminent and caring physician by his colleagues, could not have been absolutely certain that Mrs Whiten was pregnant.

"She was lying on the table with her abdomen open and her uterus exposed. This was the situation in which Mr Dixon had to make up his mind."

Nottingham Crown Court heard Mrs Whiten, a part-time

university lecturer, now 38, was not told of her pregnancy until after the operation. She said she was devastated by the news and that, although on the pill at the time, she "would have loved to have had a baby" at some time in the future, but believed she was infertile.

During surgery, Mr Dixon noticed a swelling of the womb and realised there was a possibility that his patient was pregnant. He decided to go ahead with the operation after failing to contact her husband, and consulting medical notes which revealed she had previously overdosed on anti-depressants. Mr Dixon believed Mrs Whiten could not cope with an unwanted and unplanned pregnancy and if she had the baby there would have been a grave risk of permanent injury to her mental health.

"The easiest thing for me to do would have been to take a look, closed the abdomen and walked away. I was trying to do the best for my patient, but that would have been doing the best for myself," he said.

He also feared the foetus might have been abnormal because of drugs Mrs White had taken for suspected endometriosis, a painful spreading

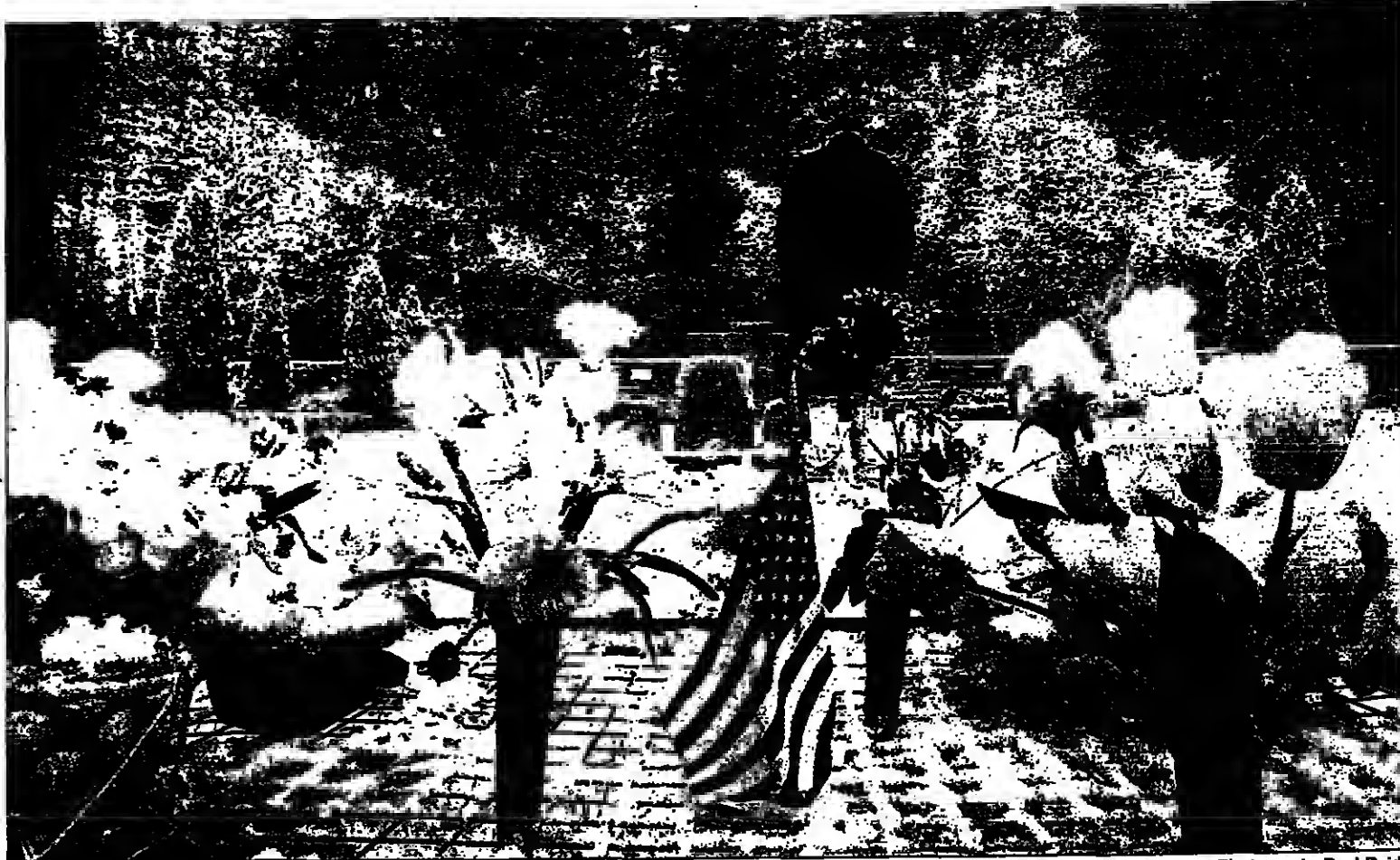
of the womb lining, which was the reason for the original operation. He added that her age, then 35, also influenced his decision.

The jury ruled that Mr Dixon, who will soon return to King's Mill, acted within the law in an emergency situation, where his patient's mental health was at risk.

"It is a great relief to see the end of nearly three years of severe stress for me, my family and, of course, Mrs Whiten," he said.

Mrs Whiten, who broke down and sobbed loudly as the verdict was announced, is believed to be pursuing a civil action for damages.

In a brief statement her solicitor said it had been "a very rough and difficult three weeks" for Mrs Whiten and her family.



Floral tribute: A man visits the memorial gardens at Lockerbie on the anniversary of the 1988 Pan Am bomb which killed 270 people. Photograph: Paul Reid

ADVERTISEMENT

APPEAL FOR THE CHILDREN OF BOSNIA

Could you send a better gift this Christmas?

Disinfectant, nappies, washing materials – not the first things to spring to mind when you think about buying presents this Christmas. But for mothers in Bosnia who have almost nothing left with which to care for their children, these basic essentials mean the world. And they can be found in each baby box sent with a donation in Britain to a despairing mother in Bosnia, via British charity Feed the Children.

As peace in Bosnia is trumpeted in the corridors of power, a young mother sheltering in a tractor cabin in north-west Bosnia knows what the really important issue is tonight: how to keep her shivering and vulnerable toddler safe from disease and infection in appalling conditions and biting cold.

She has been living on the edge of life since October, when she was forced to flee her home in Velika Kladusa – with only five minutes to pack a carrier bag – and huddle with 22,000 other people along five kilometres of road in Klupjensko valley.

She is one of 14,000 mothers in Bosnia and Croatia who have received baby boxes full of the basic essentials they need to help protect their children from the filthy conditions in which they are surviving: clean nappies and baby cream to soothe burning nappy rash, soap to wash urine-soaked babygroes and dirty nappies, antiseptic for cuts, disinfectant for the muddy floors of their shelters...

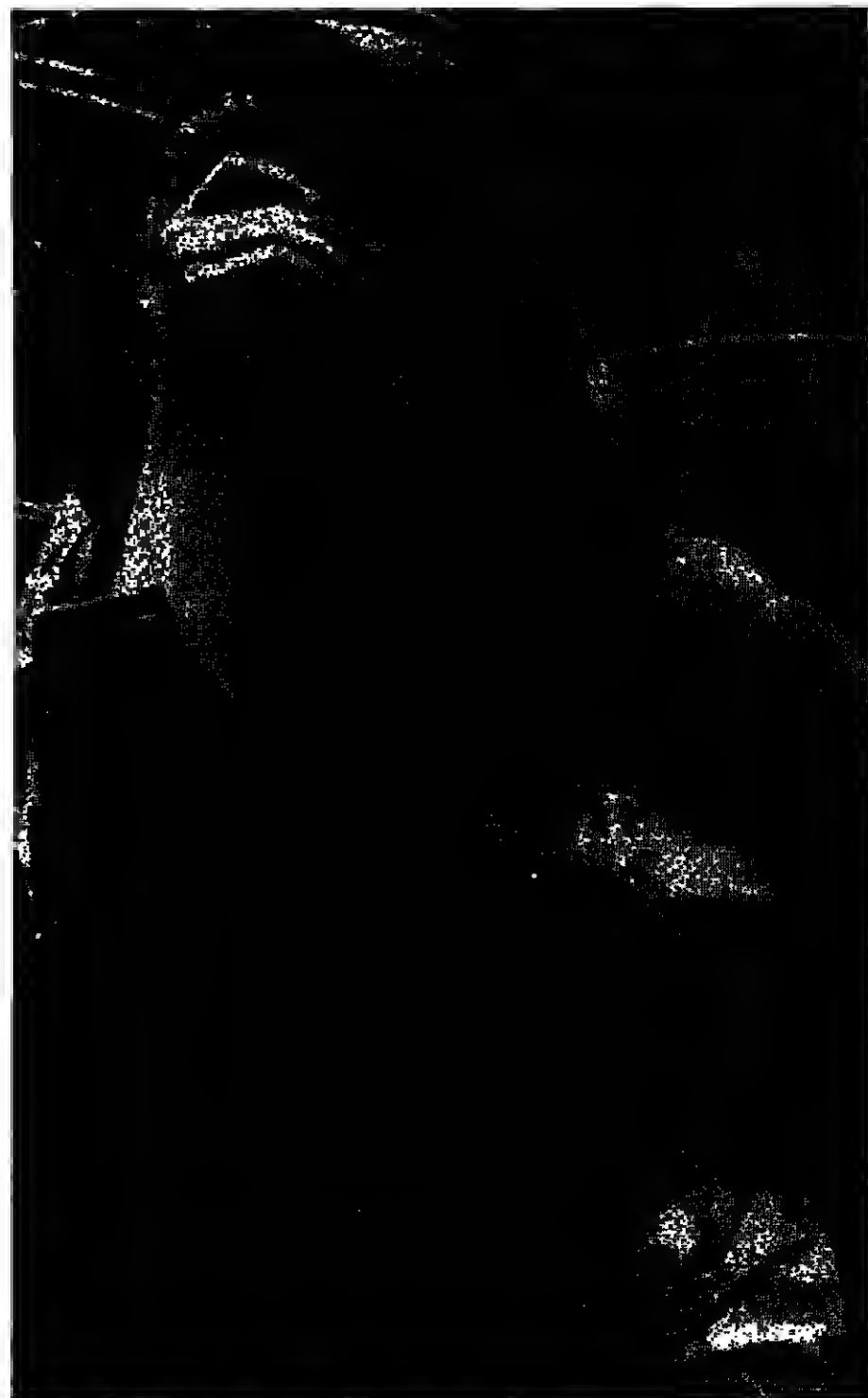
you, we care what happens to you," explains Guynor Jones, Volunteer Co-ordinator at Feed the Children. "They take it very personally."

So do the individuals who take up Feed the Children's invitation to send a message along with their £30 donation.

"I wanted to send some love with all the practical things in a baby box."

"Seeing those mothers in Bosnia on the television, clinging to their children for dear life in appalling conditions, I wanted to do more than send a donation," says Karin Weatherup, who has sent a baby box. "I wanted to send a message. I wanted to say to the mother opening the box, 'You're doing an amazing job, and my family think about you every night'. Feed the Children enabled me to do that, for which I'm very grateful."

Julie Griffin was drawn to the idea of sending a baby box to Bosnia for the same reason. "I just wanted to send some love with all the practical things in a baby box. It was that personal involvement which really appealed to me."



Despite the Dayton peace initiative, mothers and young children in Bosnia trying to rebuild their lives need even the most basic essentials to succeed.



A message from you this Christmas would mean so much to a Bosnian mother.

Does peace in Bosnia make a difference?

In many areas of Bosnia, peace simply means that the shooting has stopped. But the problem is that whole communities have been chased from their homes, and are either too afraid to return or will find only a scorched patch of earth or bombed-out shell where their home used to be.

"There are many truly lost people," says Stewart Crocker, Deputy Director at Feed the Children. "We must ensure they are not forgotten amidst the news of the Dayton peace initiative. Their needs are tremendous, especially those of the mothers and young children. They are trying to move forward, trying to rebuild their lives."

"People in Britain can take one major worry from these mothers by giving them what they need to care for their little ones – a Feed the Children



Patient and doctor: Barbara Whiten and Reginald Dixon

Surgeons 'must practise within law at all times'

For three years Barbara Whiten's main baby has been kept in a morgue while lawyers argued whether the gynaecologist who aborted the 11-week old foetus during an operation unlawfully procured a miscarriage, writes Nicole Veash.

The case against Reginald Dixon was the first criminal prosecution of a surgeon for carrying out an abortion without a woman's consent. He was charged under a 19th-century law against back-street abortion.

After the not guilty verdict, a watchdog group, the Hysterectomy Legal Fighting Fund, called for an inquiry into King's Mill hospital, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, where Mrs Whiten's routine hysterectomy went wrong. Two other women have complained about their gynaecological treatment there, it claimed.

In Mrs Whiten's case the decision to carry out the abortion was taken in minutes while she was anaesthetised and on the operating table. Mr Dixon tried to contact her husband but when this proved impossible he relied on medical notes.

Mrs Whiten told the court she had wanted a baby.

Mr Dixon qualified as a doctor at London University in 1961 and became a member of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in 1972. Married with two grown up sons, he is respected by staff and patients, colleagues say.

Mrs Whiten, who lives with her second husband and two teenage stepsons, was referred with painful gynaecological

problems going back two years. Endometriosis was diagnosed and she was told her chances of becoming pregnant would progressively decline.

She was also found to be suffering from depression and prescribed anti-depressants. Soon afterwards her father died and she received psychiatric support. It was at this point that she tried to commit suicide by overdosing on 16 of her tablets. The court was told it was the second time she had tried to take her life by taking an overdose.

It was claimed she told nurses booking her in for her hysterectomy that she had not had a period since the previous Christmas, but that no tests were done to see if this was because she was pregnant.

The case has divided surgeons and women's groups.

A spokesman for the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists said: "Members... must practise within the law at all times. In extreme situations where a surgeon has to make a difficult decision during surgery, they must consider what are the best options available to the patient, this includes stopping the operation to allow time for discussion."

Beverley Beech, chair of the Association for Improvement in the Maternity Services, said all patients have the absolute right to determine what will be done to them and should be wary of signing blanket consent forms. "This is just not acceptable, you should only sign consent forms for exactly what operation has been agreed for," she said.

Britain in talks to limit fish quota cuts

KATHERINE BUTLER
Brussels

British fishermen were facing steep cuts in their quotas last night as European Union ministers edged towards a deal drastically reducing 1996 catches. As negotiations got under way, only the exact scale of the cuts remained to be decided.

The new quota reductions ordered by Brussels to protect dwindling stocks, will coincide with the entry on 1 January of the Spanish fleet into most of Britain's fishing grounds and will further antagonise Eurosceptics who inflicted an embarrassing defeat on the

Government by rejecting EU fishing policy in a Commons vote on Tuesday.

Tony Baldry, the fisheries minister, was last night battling to water down the worst of the cuts and extract concessions for the British fleet despite repeated warnings that stocks for some species are close to exhaustion.

During one-to-one talks with the Spanish EU president and the European Commission he put the case for concessions on North Sea plaice, herring off the west coast of Scotland and plaice and sole in western waters. Mr Baldry said afterwards that talks had been constructive.



Children in Bosnia and Croatia have suffered enough. You can help them recover.

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Inside each box, packed by volunteers at Feed the Children's aid supply centre in Reading, is a message from the person who made it possible. For the exhausted, often traumatised woman who receives it, it is a potent sign that somewhere, somebody is thinking of her, and her efforts to protect her child.

"It's like a voice breaking through the isolation and hopelessness surrounding these mothers and children, saying 'we know how hard it is for

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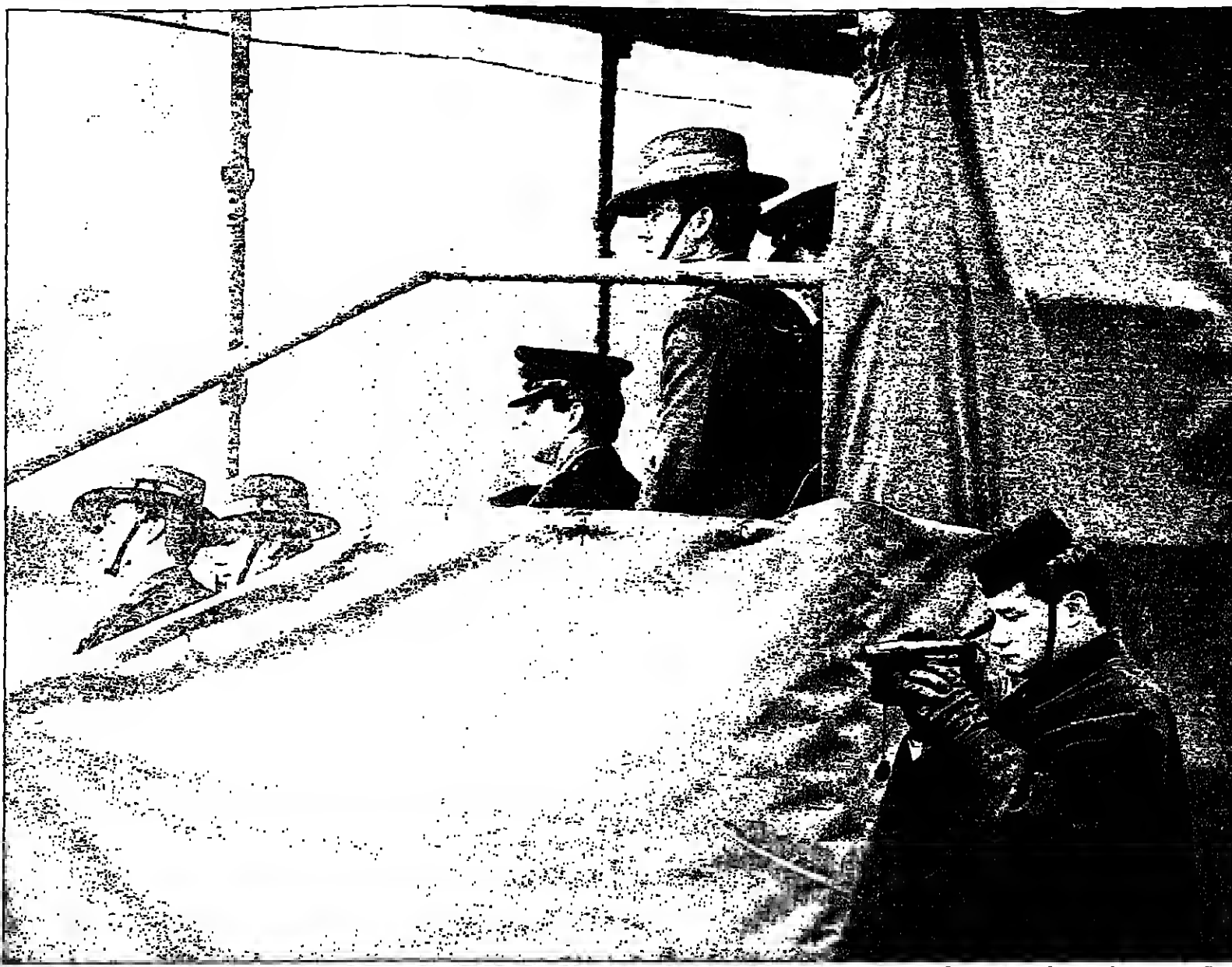
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Registered charity no. 803236.



news



On the sidelines: A soldier filming the passing-out parade yesterday at Queen Elizabeth Barracks, in Church Crookham, Hampshire, of the first Gurkhas to complete their basic training in Britain. The 152 young men were all recruited from Nepal. Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

Doctors blamed for discharging suicide girl, 16

JOHN MCKIE

A 16-year-old girl who killed herself had been sent home from hospital 24 hours earlier after doctors decided she was not a suicide risk, the girl's mother claimed yesterday.

Molly O'Riordan said she asked doctors at Southampton General Hospital to admit her daughter, Jessica, and have her seen by a psychiatrist after a suicide attempt on Monday in which she threw herself under a train.

"She didn't leave the hospital with the consent of her family. She didn't leave the hospital with my consent and they wouldn't admit her," Mrs O'Riordan, 46, said.

The following evening, Jessica went to a concert by the pop group Pulp in Bournemouth. After the concert, she went with a friend to a hotel where she jumped to her death from a fourth-floor fire escape.

Mrs O'Riordan, a social worker who specialises in fostering and adoption, said yesterday: "When I arrived at the hospital, I said to the doctor, 'Look at the state of her, she's



Molly O'Riordan: 'I didn't want her discharged'

shivering'. There was nothing physically wrong with her but I said that she should be kept in overnight. . . The duty doctors assessed her as not being suicidal. They were wrong. 'Everybody can be wrong and people make incorrect professional judgements all the time and that's life, but I didn't want her discharged.

"The police officer with me also thought Jessica should have been kept in for the night."

A spokeswoman for the hospital refused to comment in de-

tail because of the forthcoming inquest on the death. But she said: "The fact is that there was discussion and that discussion included the patient, who was uninjured."

"Our doctors made a clinical decision that she should be allowed home with a competent adult, her mother."

Mrs O'Riordan, of Totton, near Southampton, said her daughter had not seemed unhappy on Tuesday, in spite of the previous evening's suicide attempt. "She was sulley and miserable in the morning but was in better spirits later in the day. I asked her several times if she had any intention of doing what she had done before and she said 'No, absolutely not'."

Mrs O'Riordan defended her decision to let her daughter attend the concert. "It was a birthday treat and the tickets had been bought weeks earlier and she was going along with her sister and her friend. I had a long talk with her before she left and I told her 'no drinking, no messing around', and she really wanted to go. It was her favourite band and I didn't want to punish her for her depression."

Death from heart disease 'a lottery'

GLENDIA COOPER

Coronary heart disease "black spots" exist around Britain with a North-South divide affecting the quality of care you receive, according to research by the Labour Party.

A paper, *The Tory Health Lottery - Getting to the Heart of the Matter*, claims that 40 per cent of district health authorities in England will not meet the Government's *Health of the Nation* targets and some are getting worse rather than improving.

Excluding some London district health authorities, there is a clear North-South divide in the distribution of mortality rates for coronary heart disease. The worst DHAs identified in 1994 also figure prominently in the worst DHAs over the period covering 1984 to 1994.

Coronary heart disease is a principal cause of premature death. In 1994 nearly 18,000 men and women under 65 died from the disease in England - a higher rate than in most industrialised countries.

The five worst districts were Manchester, Rotherham, Liverpool, Sandwell and South Durham, whose mortality rates range from 82 to 71 deaths per 100,000 - nearly 60 per cent above the national average of 45 per 100,000, the report says.

Compared to that the least affected areas were West Surrey (29), Cambridge (30), Oxfordshire (30), East Sussex (31) and Northamptonshire (33). With the exception of east London and the City the 20 worst affected areas are in the North and the 20 least affected are in the South. Even within some regions there is a wide disparity

- the death rate in the worst district double that in the best.

In the North-west, Manchester (82) had double the rate of Morecambe Bay (41) and in North Thames, east London (66) had double the rate of Barnet (33), in north London.

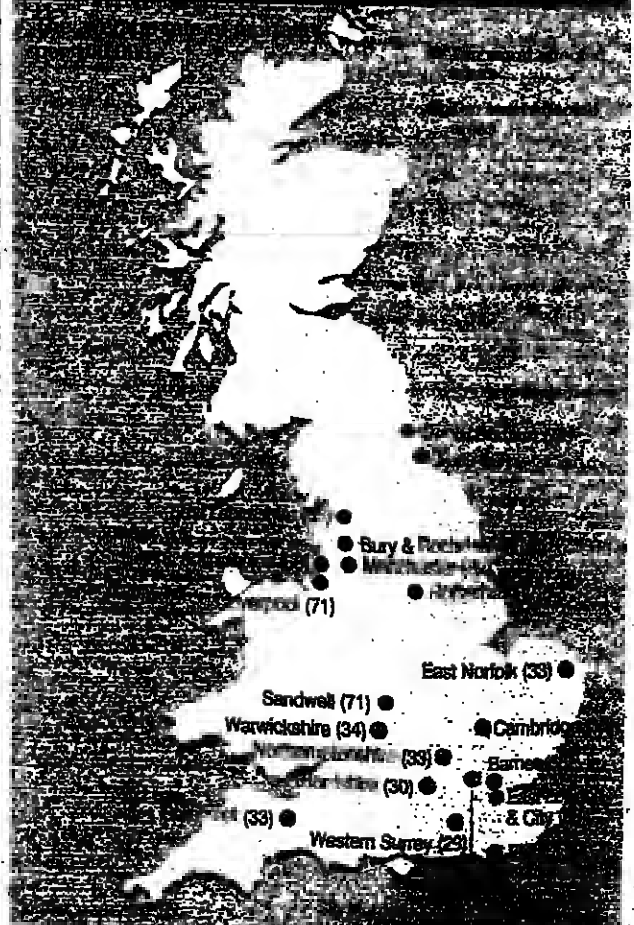
Of the 105 DHAs in England, 42 will not meet the target of reducing mortality rates between 1990 and 2000. And of the 49 DHAs with above average mortality rates in 1994, three-quarters will fail to meet their targets, meaning that the worst DHAs for heart disease are also showing the least improvement. Rotherham, Sandwell, Exeter and North Devon, Huntingdon and Herefordshire DHAs have actually seen an increase in mortality rates.

Projecting the annual average rate of change to 2000, many DHAs will remain significantly above the target of 35 deaths per 100,000 population.

Labour's analysis shows the extent and persistence of high death rates concentrated in relatively small numbers of DHAs. Henry McLeish, the party's health spokesman, said: "The dramatic variations in mortality rates between DHAs in England and DHAs within, and between, regions reinforce the findings of the Audit Commission report which said access to treatment, such as coronary artery bypass operations, depends on where you live, and more lives could be saved through well-focused preventive treatment and care."

The Audit Commission recently reported that better measures to prevent and treat the disease could save up to 8,000 more lives a year by 2000.

Heart disease: The North-South divide



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MPs' anger at £37m lost on private hospital

CHRIS BLACKHURST
Westminster Correspondent

One of the most embarrassing Whitehall débâcles in recent years, the financing and subsequent receivership of a private hospital near Glasgow, has attracted fierce criticism from an influential group of MPs.

In 1994, Healthcare International built the hospital at a cost of £181m. Intended for private patients mainly from southern Europe and the Middle East, the hospital never-

theless received £37m of British taxpayers' money.

The project was a disaster. Hardly any wealthy overseas patients made the trip to Glasgow and within months, in November 1994, after treating just 761 people – many of whom were referred from the National Health Service – it went into receivership. In February this year, the hospital was sold to a company from Abu Dhabi.

MPs on the Commons Public Accounts Committee said in a report published yesterday

that they were "disturbed that so much public money was spent" on the project.

Not enough assessment was made on its likely viability. "It is clear the expectation there would be a throughput of 5,000 patients a year from the private sector was wildly optimistic."

What official studies were made did not address market demand – something the committee found baffling.

Scottish Office excuses that the hospital has not lost public money because Strathclyde has

been left with a well-equipped modern centre providing health jobs, did not wash with MPs. They pointed out the hospital was in an area where the NHS would not necessarily have wanted a new hospital built.

Neither did the department's claim that any project of this kind, which entailed a grant of regional aid, was bound to involve risk, cut much ice. In this case, MPs said, the risks were serious. "Healthcare International as a company had no experience of running a hospital

... We consider the department's evaluation of the risks was insufficiently thorough."

Government funding went ahead despite receiving positive votes from just 3 out of the 12 members of the Scottish Industry Development Advisory Board.

The catalogue of woe, highlighted by the MPs, does not stop there.

£10.4m regional aid was given to the company to help it meet its VAT bills on its building costs, but so far Healthcare

International has avoided paying a penny of it.

£9.4m went on providing a site on land known to be heavily contaminated. The committee said it was "disturbed that it is not yet entirely clear of gas seepage". Scottish Enterprise is pursuing a claim against the contractor responsible for clearing the site.

Healthcare International, for all its financial problems, held board meetings only every three or four months. The board member appointed by Scottish

Enterprise to look after the taxpayers' interests did not attend all these meetings and failed to alert the department about the worsening financial position even though he had known about it for some time.

And problems with marketing in southern Europe, a crucial aspect of the hospital's success, were not made known to officials. "All concerned," said the committee, which has a Tory majority, "should have taken a tighter grip."

While the Scottish Office has accepted the need to deal better with such projects in future, the committee stressed the department should have ensured its director on the hospital board did his job effectively.

George Kynoch, Scottish Office minister, pointed to the Government's success in attracting inward investment to Scotland. "With success you have to have risk," he said. Strathclyde, Mr Kynoch said, now had a modern hospital which had just signed a contract to treat patients from Algeria.

Polar exploration: Briton's attempt at 'last great land journey' ended by unusual conditions and unruly sledge

Wrong kind of snow buries hopes of Antarctic crossing

STEPHEN GOODWIN

The polar explorer Roger Mear yesterday attributed the abandonment of his attempt at the first solo, unsupported crossing of Antarctica to factors with a familiar domestic ring – a sledge with the wayward qualities of a supermarket trolley and the wrong kind of snow.

"The sledge would not follow me correctly and was pulling from side to side, which meant that I was continually expending an enormous amount of energy correcting its course," he said. British-built, it had been modified to try and get the runners to follow in Mr Mear's ski tracks. But the Antarctic proved unforgiving. Temperatures dropped to -34C and wind speeds reached 60 knots.

As for the snow, Mr Mear ruefully admitted the parallel to British Rail's fabled excuse. "I've never seen snow conditions for the first 200 miles from the coast like that – and this was my fifth visit to Antarctica."

Wind-sculptured ridges known as "sastrugi" were over laid by five inches of hoar crystals.

"It was a very rough surface and very deep and the sledge was sinking in to it."

At yesterday's press conference at Heathrow Mr Mear kept to the bare facts and understated emotions.

The realisation that he had no chance of completing the 1,657-mile trek via the South



Hard labour: Roger Mear dragging his sledge during his aborted 1,657-mile trek

Pole before his food ran out was "quite a disappointment", he said. Members of the 45-year-old mountain guide's UK support team said he was "gutted".

Using skis and pulling a sledge with 450lb of supplies, Mr Mear had covered 424 miles in 42 days when he decided he was going too slowly. A day later, in a "quite dangerous" area of crevasses he sent out a distress call and was airlifted to safety.

His laboured progress contrasts with that of his 33-year-old

Norwegian rival, Borge Ousland, who set off a week later on a different line and is expected to reach the Pole by Christmas.

Mr Mear had hoped to complete the crossing in 95 days. He could have eked out his rations for 100 days, but at the time of his tough decision was already 100 miles behind schedule.

"The night before, I spent in the tent adding up the mileages," he felt "very strong

physically" and had had no problems with loneliness – one polar veteran described him as "very self-contained" – but he knew it had to be a rational decision, not emotional one.

Whether he will try again depends on Borge Ousland. Mr Mear said his immediate plans were for a quiet Christmas at home, but if the Norwegian has similar bad luck Mr Mear will in all probability start planning another attempt at "the last great land journey on earth".

Hitman 'killed wrong woman'

A woman died in a hall of bullets when she answered her front door to a killer posing as a pizza delivery man, an inquest was told yesterday.

Karen Reed, 33, probably died because the hitman mistook her for her sister Alison Ponting, the Surrey coroner, Michael Burgess, was told.

Miss Ponting was almost certainly the target because her husband, the Armenian-born Gagic Ter-Oganyan, was convicted of murdering two brothers who came to Britain to set up a Chechen embassy.

The killing happened on the evening of 30 April last year, when Miss Reed's friend Ann Smith went to her home in Woking, Surrey, to spend the evening. She told the court there was a knock at about 9.15pm. "Karen opened the door partly... I could see the figure was a man. He was holding a huge and white pizza box and he said 'Have you ordered a pizza?'"

Ms Smith said Miss Reed said she had not ordered anything. "He said, 'Is this 31 Willow Way?'" Karen said. "Yes. The next thing I heard was three loud bangs. I realised it was a gun." Ms Smith said she called an ambulance but by the time it arrived her friend was dead.

Miss Ponting, 31, told police she was convinced the gunman was trying to kill her because of her husband's conviction.

The hearing was told that two weeks before the shooting police had chased a car in the Woking area. The driver ran off and an automatic pistol with a silencer was found in a holdall along with hollowed-out bullets filled with mercury.

The coroner recorded a verdict of unlawful killing.

Detective Superintendent John Stewardson, who headed the police investigation, said later there was not enough evidence to suggest a definite reason for Miss Reed's murder but police had not ruled out the mistaken-identity theory.



Weather-worn: Roger Mear after returning to Britain yesterday Photograph: John Voos

Tabloids in court over trial prejudice

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

The Attorney General was yesterday given the go-ahead to take legal action against five national newspapers over their pre-trial coverage of a case involving Geoffrey Knights, boyfriend of the actress Gillian Taylor.

His trial on a charge of wounding with intent the *East-Enders* star's driver, Martin Davies, was halted last October by a judge who ruled that "unfair, outrageous and oppressive" publicity meant he would not be able to receive a fair hearing.

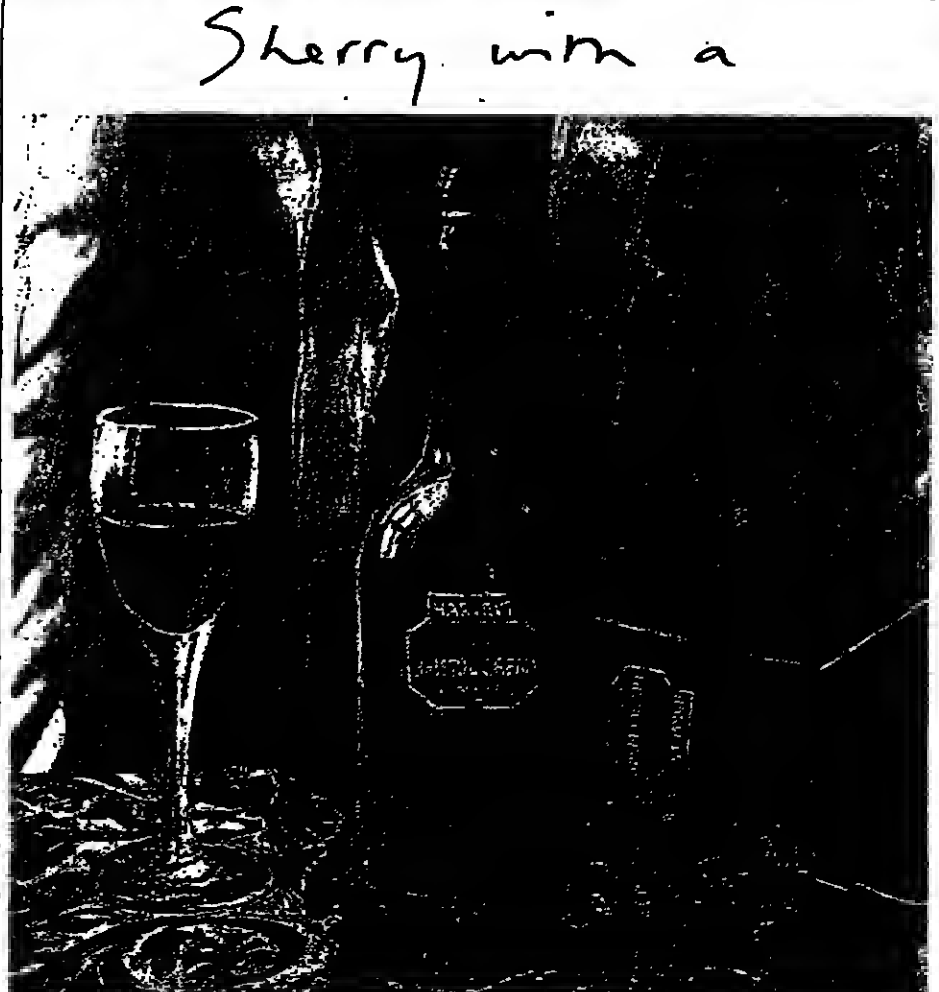
In what will be an important test of contempt law, the High Court gave Sir Nicholas Lyell the right to pursue five tabloids – the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, the *Sun*, the *Daily Star* and the now defunct *Today*.

Yesterday, Philip Havers QC, for the Attorney General, claimed in the High Court that the newspapers had pre-judged the case against Mr Knights "created a substantial risk" of prejudice.

He said that articles about the 41-year-old businessman and 39-year-old Miss Taylor began to appear the day after Mr Knights was charged in April and covered issues which would have gone before a trial jury.

The newspapers were not represented at yesterday's brief hearing. When the case comes in court, Sir Nicholas will seek heavy fines.

The newspapers are all expected to contest the proceedings, arguing that the articles did not jeopardise a fair trial and relying on a previous court ruling on the resilience of juries.



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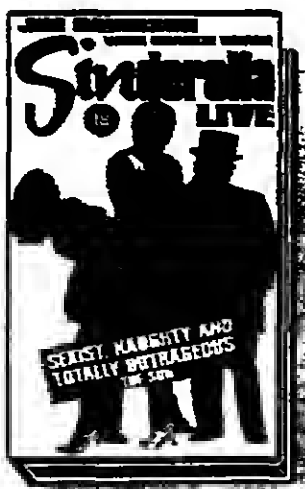
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international

Bethlehem rejoices as Israelis withdraw

PATRICK COCKBURN
BETHLEHEM

Israeli troops handed control of Bethlehem to the Palestinians yesterday in time for Yasser Arafat, chairman of the PLO, to join celebrations in the town on Christmas Eve. In Manger Square, outside the Church of the Nativity, crowds tore down the security fence protecting the Israeli police station as the last soldiers drove off.

"The soldiers will leave and the occupation will end," said Nasser Zatar, who had come from his village to celebrate the pull-out. "The Israelis won't come back. I don't think Likud

[the main Israeli right-wing party] will win the next election, and even if they do, they will have to follow Rabin's policies on the withdrawal."

As the last Israeli forces prepared to depart under terms of the present phase of the Oslo accord, members of Fatah, the strongest Palestinian political movement, started to put on red armbands and take control of the streets. The Israelis wanted to avert a repetition of the scenes in Nablus last week, when a premature announcement of their troops' departure resulted in a detachment being trapped in the old military headquarters. Hours before

they left, Israeli soldiers had taken down the Star of David flag, which they had to abandon in Nablus. As they departed, Bethlehem residents switched on the red, green and yellow lights of a Christmas tree in the square.

Bethlehem, a town of 45,000, of whom 40 per cent are Christian, is decorated with national and religious symbols. Pictures of Joseph, Mary and the infant Jesus alternate with portraits of Mr Arafat, with his stubby beard and keffiyeh head-dress. He is expected to attend a Christmas Eve mass in the Church of the Nativity and to address a mass meeting in the square outside.

Under terms of the Oslo agreement, Israel cedes military control of six Palestinian towns as well as civil and police powers in the villages where two-thirds of Palestinians on the West Bank live. The pull-out has already happened in Jenin, Qalqilya, Tulkarm and Nablus and, after the redeployment from Bethlehem, Israeli forces will leave Ramallah by the end of the month. Redeployment in Hebron is more limited because of the presence of settlers in the centre of town but is to be completed by March.

Like many people in central Bethlehem, Abed Saleh, a tourist guide and gift-shop owner,

was standing watching the Israeli police stations as the troops prepared to go.

"It will make a little difference," he said. "It will make life better for us. You won't have police telling you to go inside because you are a Muslim. We will have Palestinian police. Bethlehem will be a different place."

Not everybody was quite so jubilant. Mr Tabash, the middle-aged owner of a curio shop ambitiously called the Bethlehem Arts Gallery, was impassively watching the crowd in the square. "It is a change and people like to celebrate a change," he said. "The big powers wanted this, so the Pal-

estians almost get a state of their own." He said he was a Christian and his lack of enthusiasm may stem from Christian fears that under the Palestinian Authority they will face harassment from the Muslim majority.

Overall, however, the 1.2 million Palestinians on the West Bank feel that their lives will be improved by the partial Israeli withdrawal. Mr Zatar, 24, who works in a quarry earning the equivalent of £7 a day, had come to Bethlehem with six of his workmates to celebrate, though some of their expectations may turn out to be over-optimistic. Asked about the 135,000 Israeli settlers on the West Bank, he

said: "They will have to go. There will be no peace if they stay. They can shoot anyone of us, like they did in Hebron [where Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Palestinians in the al-Ibrahimi mosque in 1994]."

In fact, there are no signs of any settlers moving. The withdrawal from Bethlehem was delayed a few days while some 5 miles of temporary by-pass road was completed to allow the settlers south of Bethlehem to reach Jerusalem without passing through significant Palestinian-held areas.

Binyamin Netanyahu, the Likud leader, said the redeployment from the cities was "a

fait accompli". Some settlers also believe that the moment has come to admit defeat in the battle to oppose Oslo. Uri Elizur, the general secretary of the settlers' council, said in an article earlier in the month that the council should talk to the Palestinian Authority, give up Israeli army protection and drive through Palestinian villages under the protection of the Palestinian police. Not all Israelis are so resigned. Mordechai Eliahu, former Sephardi chief rabbi, has called on all Jews, including soldiers in uniform, ritually to wear their clothes in mourning whenever in future they see Bethlehem.

Bosnia's US chief warms to his task

EMMA DALY
Sarajevo

On his first full day in power, the US commander of Nato's peace implementation force in Bosnia (I-For), expressed delight at the progress made so far, which includes wresting control of vital roads into Sarajevo from the Bosnian Serbs for the first time. "I am just tickled pink with what I see already," Admiral Leighton Smith said after 24 hours in office.

The admiral yesterday met military commanders of the three warring parties when he chaired the first meeting of the Joint Military Commission. Intended as a forum for the parties and the peace-keepers to address problems in implementing the Dayton peace plan, General Rasim Delic, the Bosnian commander in chief, was in attendance but his Serb counterpart, Ratko Mladic, sent a deputy instead, presumably for fear of arrest as an indicted war criminal.

I-For officials would not comment on the meeting, which continued in the afternoon under the chairmanship of Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Walker, the British commander of Nato land forces in Bosnia.

But Admiral Smith was pleased with his portion. "We were delighted, frankly, to receive the statements of the representatives," he said at Sarajevo airport. "Each of them said they had passed instructions to their forces to co-operate fully with the Implementation Force (I-For). We have seen that in evidence."

Signs of compliance were the dejected faces of two Serb policemen at a checkpoint near Kiseljak. Powerless to stop the flow of traffic past their barriers, now hushed aside by French I-For troops, they had come only to collect their belongings.

At another sandbagged road-block close to the airport, where a Serb soldier shot and killed Bosnia's deputy prime minister as he sat in a French UN armoured personnel carrier in January 1993, Nato soldiers stood guard. It was a glorious sight to all who remembered the hundreds of aid convoys turned back or delayed at "Sierra Four", and the UN's inability to force Serbs to comply with promises of free movement.

The French, whose sector includes Sarajevo, like their British comrades in western Bosnia, have been quick to seize the initiative. The US

commander, without the benefit of several thousand troops in place, made good with few resources, driving north across the front line from Tuzla to link up with GIs on Croatia's border.

As the first German soldiers prepared to join the peace-keeping force, a German seaman was killed in the Adriatic yesterday on a frigate enforcing the arms embargo on the former Yugoslavia.

Stefen Behrens, 25, who was struck by a dinghy being lowered into the sea, was the first German soldier to die on a mission connected with the former Yugoslavia.

The Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Portillo, one of the first of what is likely to be a flood of politicians visiting Sarajevo in peacetime, underlined the change that has taken place. "The British troops were quick to take action to demonstrate the position was now quite different than before," he said. But Carl Bildt, the High Representative co-ordinating civilian international efforts in Bosnia, warned of the need to improve life for ordinary people. "If there are not visible signs of improvement it will have a detrimental effect on the political process," he said.



Facial attraction: A Greek soldier in the Nato-led Bosnia peace force disguising himself during training in northern Greece

Photograph: AFP

Tuzla's young amputees endure a long struggle

JOANNA GIBBON

Bill Leeson, co-director of War Child, found his visit to the general hospital in Tuzla very gruelling. He was visiting children and young people, injured during the Bosnian war, who were being fitted with artificial limbs.

"I found seeing the children being fitted terribly embarrassing. I saw this strange pink stump and tried not to avert my eyes with shock," Mr Leeson said. Virtually all of the injuries involved the amputation of legs, feet and legs below the knee.

War Child, in collaboration with the Fund for Refugees in Slovenia, donated £102,000 of prosthetics to the hospital which were delivered in September. In its first donation it has assisted 700 amputees. A further £50,000 is needed for more prosthetic sections, especially joints, but also to provide much-needed training to the medical staff at the hospital.

Dr Sooria Kumaran, Consultant in Rehabilitation Med-



icine at the Roehampton Rehabilitation Centre, Queen Mary's Hospital, London, finds that children and young people adapt far quicker to amputations and prosthetics than adults.

"Children are highly resilient, are eager to learn quickly and do so easily," he maintains. But it is a lengthy process. "A total assessment of the child is necessary, including paediatricians and psychologists. The psychological aspects are very important, especially counselling for both the parents and the child," he says.

Explosions can cause more than one injury, which might

take longer to heal than a planned surgical amputation. Whereas Dr Kumaran would expect to fit a child with a prosthetic about three to four weeks after an amputation, a bomb blast might cause the skin on the stump to be more sensitive and skin grafts might be necessary.

After fitting the artificial limb, the child is seen daily by both a physiotherapist and the prosthetic specialist, who adjusts the new limb as the child learns to walk again. This involves exercises to strengthen the muscles in the stump; instruction on how to remove or fit the limb, and how to get up after falling over. Depending on the child's needs this can take about three to four weeks. Then the cosmetic covering is put on the leg.

Children soon get depressed by their lack of mobility and pick up bad movement habits with substitutes like wheelchairs and crutches. "They have to unlearn these poor habits once they are fitted with a limb and this can take up much time and lead to resistance. It is vital that they learn the proper way of walking and moving with a new limb quickly," said Dr Kumaran.

The muscles on the stump waste away rapidly if they are not used, but children can build up and strengthen weakened muscles much faster than adults.

The Tuzla children are not likely to be receiving such a rigorous programme as that of Roehampton but the hospital staff are doing their best, says Mr Leeson. "As I left I felt, 'My God, I'm lucky I've got all my limbs', but as always I am uplifted by the people's fighting spirit, they simply carry on."

Juppé tries economic kick-start

MARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

The French prime minister, Alain Juppé, yesterday set out a programme of measures to boost the economy. It is aimed at meeting public concern about the slow progress in cutting unemployment since President Chirac's election last May.

The proposals were Mr Juppé's opening gambit at the much-publicised social summit: the round-table discussion intended to end a month of industrial turbulence and economic paralysis. The summit of government ministers, employers' representatives and trade union leaders was one of the conditions set by the trade unions for ending their strikes and protests against the Juppé plan for welfare reform.

Mr Juppé said he was asking his economy minister, Jean Arthuis, to pursue four priorities: to release savings and increase consumer spending; to support house-buying and sell-

ing to relieve the burden of personal taxation and deductions from pay; and to ensure a moratorium on such deductions. He would hold three further "social" summits between now and the summer: one on youth employment, one on family policy and the third on working hours.

The technique of setting out extensive categories, passing down to ministers the actual implementation of difficult decisions, and the projection of hard discussions on to meetings in the indefinite future has become a feature of Mr Juppé's policy-making, and it was not immediately clear how trade union leaders would respond.

Mr Juppé also faced pressure from his own side when he refused to withdraw a new tax due to be introduced in January, which has been criticised as a further potential brake on consumer spending. A crescendo of calls from MPs for it to be abandoned had been supported by the transport minister, Bernard Pons, known hitherto as a loy-

al Juppé supporter. Mr Pons's intervention had brought a curt statement from the prime minister's office that the tax would be levied as planned.

Mr Juppé had, however, taken the precaution of limiting yesterday's agenda in advance



Blondel: welfare reform is on his union's agenda

to rule out any discussion of welfare reform and limit disagreement. Indeed, he had preferred to call yesterday's event a "jobs summit" rather than a "social summit" - a discrepancy which

trade unions chose to ignore in their haste to claim victory and end a dispute that threatened to escape their control.

For the trade unions, a key attraction of a social summit was its symbolic association with the emergency round-table of May 1968 which produced the "Grenelle accords" - agreements raising the minimum wage, increasing pay across the board and reducing working hours. Although the accords did not end the revolt of 1968, the meeting is seen by union leaders as one of their finest hours.

Mr Juppé denied that his "social summit" was in any way a Grenelle-2, and this complicated the trade unions' position. Marc Blondel for the Forc Ouvrière, who had emerged as one of the leaders of the strike movement, said this week that he would raise the subject of welfare reform whether it was on the agenda or not. Louis Vianney, the leader of the militant CGT, questioned whether any progress could be made

without such a discussion. Only Nicole Notat, of the more moderate CFDT, seemed happy to discuss employment alone, especially if it could be placed in the context of reducing working hours. He has generally been more sympathetic to the concept of Mr Juppé's reforms. Employers' organisations, however, were concerned that if the summit strayed into working conditions, this could prompt unrest to spread into the private sector.

While yesterday's summit threatened to founder on the diplomatic compromises that had brought it into being, all the predictions were that at least a Christmas truce would be reached.

The unions needed a truce to bring honour to the return to work; the employers needed one to recoup some of their losses from the past month, and the government in the person of Mr Juppé needed one to salvage something of his battered authority.

Chechen rebels pull out as war heats up

PHIL REEVES
Moscow

Chechen rebels were last night withdrawing from Gudermes, the republic's second town, after some of the worst fighting for months. The streets were littered with bodies, unburied because of heavy shelling.

A week after 600 rebels stormed into the area, a rebel commander, Alsan Maskadov, announced that large numbers of Chechen fighters were pulling out to avoid further casualties among warring sides

and among citizens. Several hundred Chechen soldiers were later seen leaving in convoy.

The Russian military had sealed off the town, which they shelled, and threatened to fire on reporters, so reports of the mayhem have been patchy. But evidence is mounting that it was one of the bloodier battles in the year-long war. According to the mayor of Gudermes, Ramzan Vatsayev, 100 civilians died in the fighting, in which Russian helicopters fired on rebels and citizens. The rebels seized much of the town as part of the

effort to stop last week's elections in the breakaway republic. The Russians have said they only used helicopters to attack identifiable rebel positions.

Mr Vatsayev also told the Interfax news agency that Russian soldiers had been tossing grenades into places where some of the town's 60,000 people had been taking shelter. If true, the war's already high number of civilian victims, including the untold thousands who died in the bombardment of Grozny, will swell further. While the situation in Gud-

ermes appeared to be easing, tensions were high elsewhere in the breakaway republic - particularly in Akhmat, 30 miles from Grozny, where an official said 300 rebels had entered the town, causing a stand-off with the police. Russian troops had reportedly gathered there, but had not intervened.

Such flare-ups in Chechnya pose another headache for the Kremlin, which is already immersed in the difficult task of establishing a campaign strategy for the presidential race in June, in a country where the

Communists are now unarguably the most popular party.

Vyacheslav Mikhailov, Russia's chief negotiator in peace talks, said yesterday that the Yeltsin administration and the Chechen government will soon set up a commission to develop a power-sharing treaty. But the separatists seem likely to regard this as worthless, partly because the Chechen government is a Moscow puppet, set up by rigged elections, and partly because the agreement would fall short of independence.



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Colombian jet disaster 'may be sabotage'

PHIL DAVISON
Latin America Correspondent

An American Airlines Boeing 757 flying from Miami to the Colombian city of Cali crashed into a mountain during its approach on Wednesday night, apparently killing almost all 164 people on board. There were unconfirmed reports of four survivors. Most of those were on board were thought to be Colombians.

Colombian civil aviation officials said they could not rule out sabotage. The fact that the crash occurred on the seventh anniversary of Lockerbie according to British time - although it was 20 December, local time - appeared unlikely to be more than coincidence.

The plane's destination, Cali, is home to the world's biggest cocaine cartel, most of whose leaders are now in jail and have threatened both the Colombian and US governments with terrorist attacks if they are not granted leniency.

Colombian officials were yesterday trying to find out whether any known cartel figures had been on board the crashed plane, American Airlines Flight 965, which took off from Miami International Airport at 6.35pm.

The plane went down in what Colombian security forces regard as a "hot zone", an area largely controlled by Marxist guerrillas who have in the past destroyed the radio beacons which help pilots locate their position.

Equally, however, the terrain in the area is known to be difficult. Robin Rackham, a pilot who has flown extensively for Avianca in the region, says that like most Colombian airports, the one at Cali is in a valley and requires very careful flying. He said: "There are mountain peaks reaching 16,000 or 17,000 feet in the region and you are always worried about getting lost. At this time of the year there is the added hazard of

frequent thunderstorms which you have to fly around." He said that while Cali had modern navigation equipment, the air traffic controllers' command of English, the international language of aviation, was limited. "They talk to their own pilots in Spanish which means you can't understand what is going on. It is a very hostile environment in which to fly."

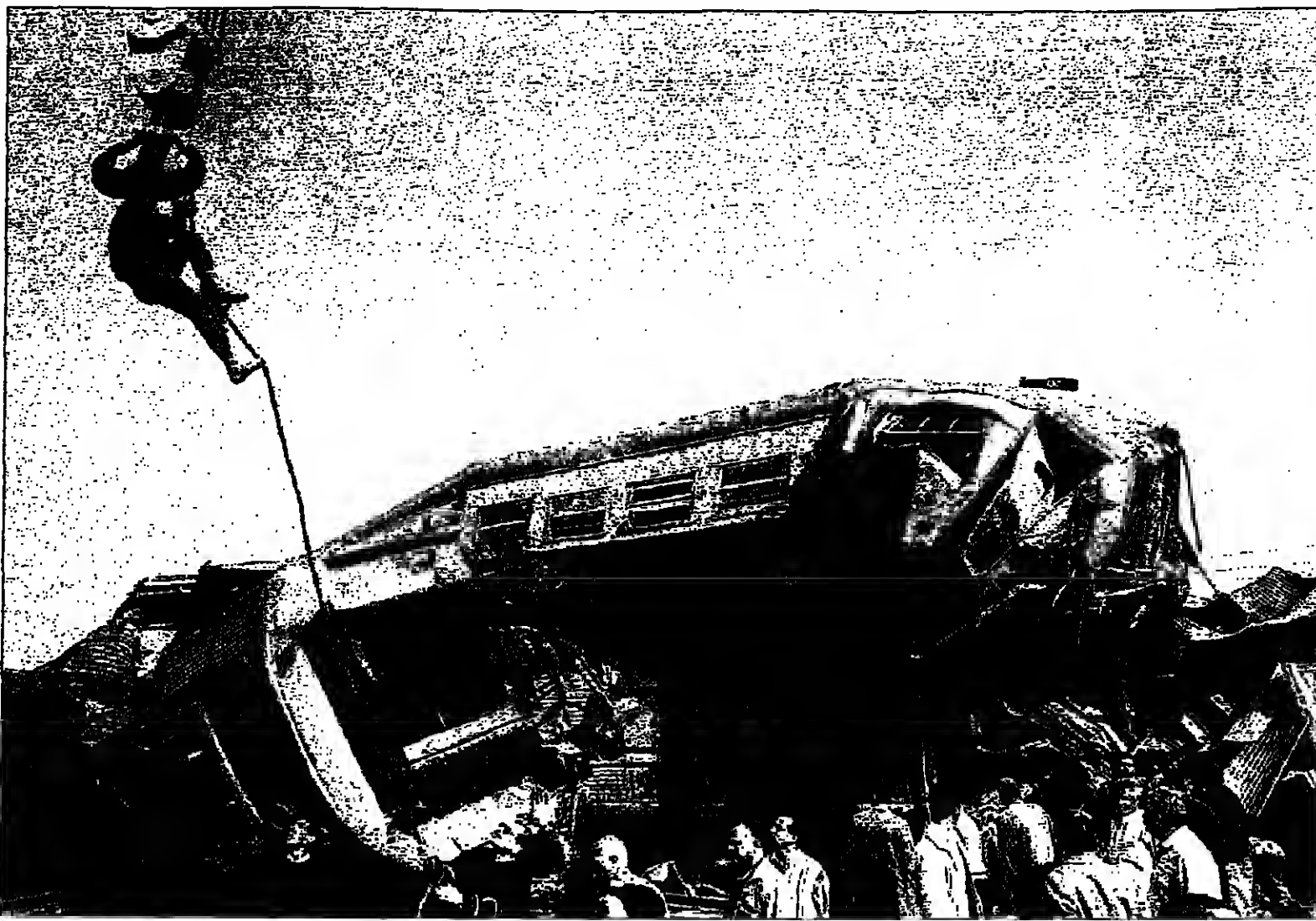
Mr Rackham said the location of the accident, 64 miles from the airport, indicated that the pilot had begun his descent from the cruising height of about 30,000 feet. At the normal rate of descent, the plane should have been at an altitude of about 20,000 feet at this distance from the airport.

The chairman of American Airlines, Robert Crandall, told his 9,500 employees over their public address system in Fort Worth, Texas, that he was "horrified and mystified" by the crash. He then told a news conference yesterday in the crash area was good, there was neither wind nor rain, the plane had been overhauled this year and the pilot had 26 years with the airline and knew the Cali area well.

Eyewitnesses described human limbs and clothes hanging from trees and scattered across the San Jose mountainside near the town of Buga, 40 miles north of Cali. The witnesses said the plane was in small pieces.

That made all the more remarkable local radio reports that four people may have survived. American Airlines, one of the biggest US carriers, said it believed all 156 passengers and eight crew members had died. If there were survivors, that would suggest that the plane did not break up in mid-air and the most likely cause was that a navigation error caused it to fly into a mountain, Mr Rackham said.

It was the first accident involving the Boeing 757, first flown in 1982 and used by 46 airlines in 20 countries.



Rail disaster: A rescue worker hangs from a crane at Badrasheen, outside Cairo, the site of Egypt's worst railway accident in 15 years. At least 66 people died when an early morning workers' train ran into the back of another. Photograph: Mona Sharaf/Reuters

Gingrich loses grip on budget revolt

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

As President Bill Clinton and his opponents struggle to find a formula to restart budget negotiations, the row has brought home one truth about this Congress - that the Speaker, Newt Gingrich, leader of the Republican revolution on Capitol Hill, can no longer control his most fervent revolutionaries.

Despite much to-ing and fro-ing along Pennsylvania Avenue yesterday, the deadlock seemed intact, meaning 260,000 federal workers have no idea when this second partial government shutdown in six weeks will end.

One thing is certain: they will only return to work with the acquiescence of the 70-odd first term, or freshmen, Republi-

cans who rode to Washington on the crest of the wave which gave the party control of the House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years.

Since then, this group, accounting for almost a third of Republican strength in the House and ideologically committed to rolling back government, cutting taxes and eliminating the deficit, has been a force sustaining Mr Gingrich.

But now, as the Speaker edges towards compromise, the newcomers whom Democrats sarcastically describe as the "Magnificent 70" are digging in their heels, adamant they will give no ground to a White House which they accuse of backtracking on every promise. It was the freshmen who demolished the fragile under-

standing brought back by Mr Gingrich and Bob Dole, the Senate majority leader, from their meeting with Mr Clinton on Tuesday, insisting they would not vote for any stop-gap spending measure allowing government to re-open until a deal to balance the budget within seven years was signed and sealed.

Afterwards, a rattled Mr Gingrich played down the rebellion in his ranks. But the revolution is devouring its children. The purist newcomers are almost as suspicious of their erstwhile inspiration as they are of Mr Clinton. The prime beneficiary is the President, revelling in another opportunity to paint the Republicans as zealots, and to blame the breakdown on "extremists" who had become "the tail which wagged the dog".

Yesterday the political warfare grew even more tangled as Mr Clinton announced he would veto a Republican welfare reform bill, and the House for the first time overrode a Presidential veto of a bill reforming product liability, while the White House and Congress inched towards a compromise that would keep their battle over Whitewater documents out of the federal courts.

But the budget remains the key, with prospects of a deal before the New Year diminishing every day. If an agreement emerges, it will almost certainly not be based on the headline plan of the Republicans or the vague formulas of the White House, but on a compromise worked out by frustrated moderates in both parties.

One of these, elaborated by a bipartisan group of senators, would sharply reduce the seven-year \$245bn (£160bn) tax cut on which the Republican intake of 1994 is so bent. Another plan, from conservative Democrats in the House, would eliminate the cut entirely, in return for smaller reductions in the Medicare and Medicaid federal health schemes.

It is possible a bipartisan majority in both Senate and House could be put together around these schemes. That would bypass the headlines. But it would lay bare the Republican split and deprive Mr Gingrich of much of his power base. "Why would I do anything to my freshmen?" he asked after Wednesday's insurrection. "They made us a majority."

American puppy killer gets 9 years

Miami - A 37-year-old man has been jailed for nine and a half years in Florida for hating a puppy to death, writes Phil Davison.

Miami judge Stan Blake issued the final sentence, under Florida's Cruelty to Animals statute, after the case caused uproar among the Sunshine State's animal lovers, then nation-wide after coverage on network television. The court was inundated with letters calling for a tough sentence.

The judge took into consideration the fact that the defendant, Alan Laboy, was an habitual offender, mostly for drug-related crimes.

Laboy was seen by neighbours slamming the gold Labrador puppy twice on to a pavement outside his home after its barking woke him up on 4 August 1994. He apologised to the judge, saying: "I would like you to forgive what I've done. That day I was very ill on drugs."

Another judge initially sentenced Laboy to four and a half years after the incident - partly because the crime had violated his probation on drug-related convictions.

In what is referred to here in legal terms as an "enhancement" to the sentence, based on Laboy's "habitual offender" status, Judge Blake this week added a further five years in a state prison and assigned him to a drug rehabilitation programme.

Announcing his ruling, the judge said: "I wish the community would show the same fervent interest for other cases - child abuse, spouse abuse or abuse of the elderly."

"Unfortunately, perhaps we as a society accept violence towards people more than we do towards pets."

A jury had convicted Laboy after only 27 minutes of deliberation. Prosecutors showed them X-rays of the puppy's injuries which they said proved Laboy had slammed it on to the pavement.

The prosecution had called on Judge Blake to "enhance" the sentence by the maximum ten years, which would have meant fourteen and a half years in jail for Laboy.

Charity under US investigation

DAVID USBORNE
New York

The reputation of the Save the Children charity is under siege in the United States following revelations that its American operation, only loosely linked to its counterpart in Britain, is under government investigation.

The State Attorney-General's office in Connecticut, where the American Save the Children is based, confirmed yesterday that it is looking into complaints that the charity may have misled donors in its fund-raising promotion campaigns as to how much of its income is actually spent on helping children.

The probe is limited to Save the Children's activities within the US, most notably on Native American reservations in Arizona.

Problems in those programmes, as well as the issue of misrepresentation to donors, were highlighted in an ABC television exposé this week.

"We received several inquiries from a number of quarters," Richard Blumenthal, the Connecticut Attorney-General, told the Independent. "We have begun an investigative effort focusing on the veracity of representations that are given to contributors about how the money is used." If the probe finds cause for complaint against the charity, it will be obliged to reach an agreement to change its practices or be forced to do so by the courts.

There are Save the Children charities operating in 20 countries around the world, sharing the name and logo and all be-



Campaign questioned: The charity's logo

longing to the International Save the Children Alliance in Geneva. But the British Save the Children, whose patron is the Princess Royal, has no relationship with the day-to-day running of the foreign-based

arms of the charity, said a spokesman in London.

The Connecticut investigation is expected to focus in particular on a pie chart used in now discontinued fund-raising advertisements for Save the Children, purportedly showing the proportions of money spent on programmes and other administrative costs. Questions have also been raised about claims made by the charity that money donated by sponsors will be channelled to specific children. Ten years ago the charity agreed to stop promising to the sponsors to individual cases, Mr Blumenthal said.

The President of Save the Children in America, Charles McCormick, conceded to ABC that the charity had not met all of its goals.

IN BRIEF

Dozens die in Pakistan bomb blast

Peshawar - A 55lb car bomb in a busy marketplace killed more than 30 people and wounded over 100 in the capital of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. No one took responsibility for the blast but police and the Interior Ministry blamed the government of Afghanistan, which accuses Pakistan of supporting its most powerful rival, the Islamic Taliban militia. AP

Berlusconi brother jailed for bribes

Milan - Paolo Berlusconi, younger brother of the former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, was sentenced to 16 months in jail for paying bribes to obtain a building permit for a golf course. He received a lighter sentence than requested by prosecutors after paying the court 1.3bn lire (£530,000) in damages. Reuters

Opposition landslide in Mauritius

Port Louis - An opposition alliance led by Navin Ramgoolam and Paul Berenger swept to a resounding victory in the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius. They seized all 60 seats, including that of the Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who had been in power for 15 years. Reuters

Student's killer hanged in Japan

Tokyo - Japan hanged the convicted murderer of a 22-year-old woman student in the third round of executions staged under the current government. Japan stopped executing death-row convicts in November 1989, but 13 people have been hanged since March 1993, according to Amnesty International. Reuters

AmEx attack linked to US role in Bosnia

Vienna - Anti-American radicals demanding that Nato get out of Bosnia and the Islamic world claimed responsibility for an arson attack on an American Express office in Salzburg. The claim, by a group calling itself "Cell for Internationalism", was made in a letter to Austrian state television. AP

Mother charged for setting daughter free

Summerville, South Carolina - Deborah Harter, 38, who has spent almost two weeks shackled to her 15-year-old daughter, Tonya Kline, has been charged with contempt of court for allegedly letting go of the chain. A judge ordered the shackling until Tonya is sentenced on 27 January for truancy, shoplifting and house-breaking. AP

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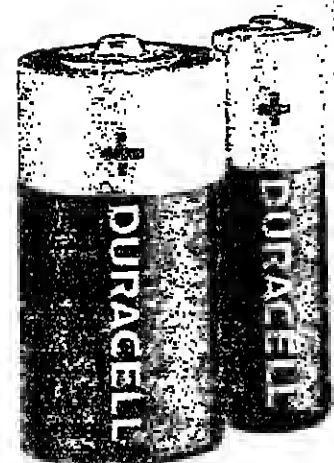
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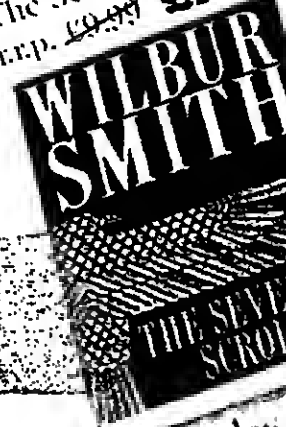
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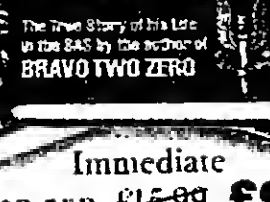


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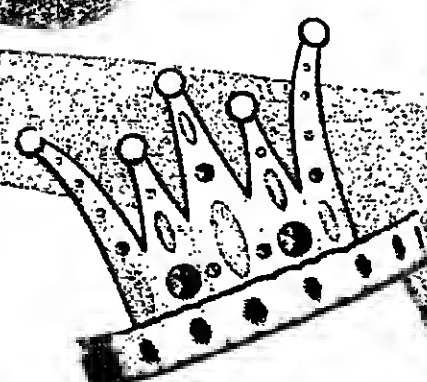
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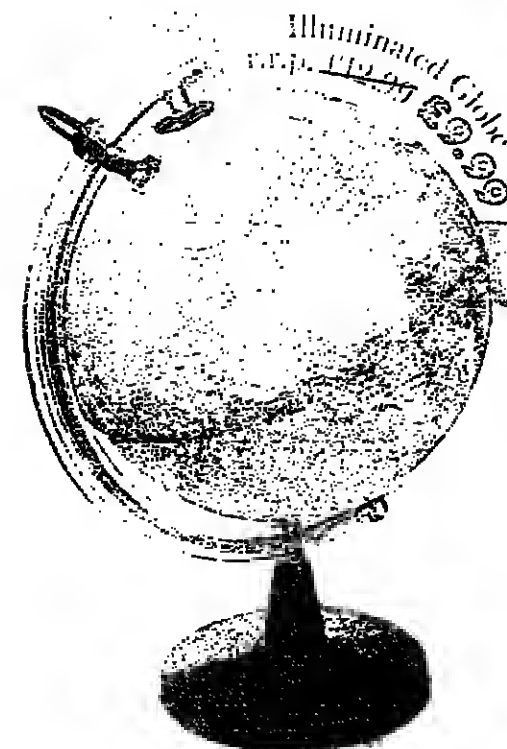


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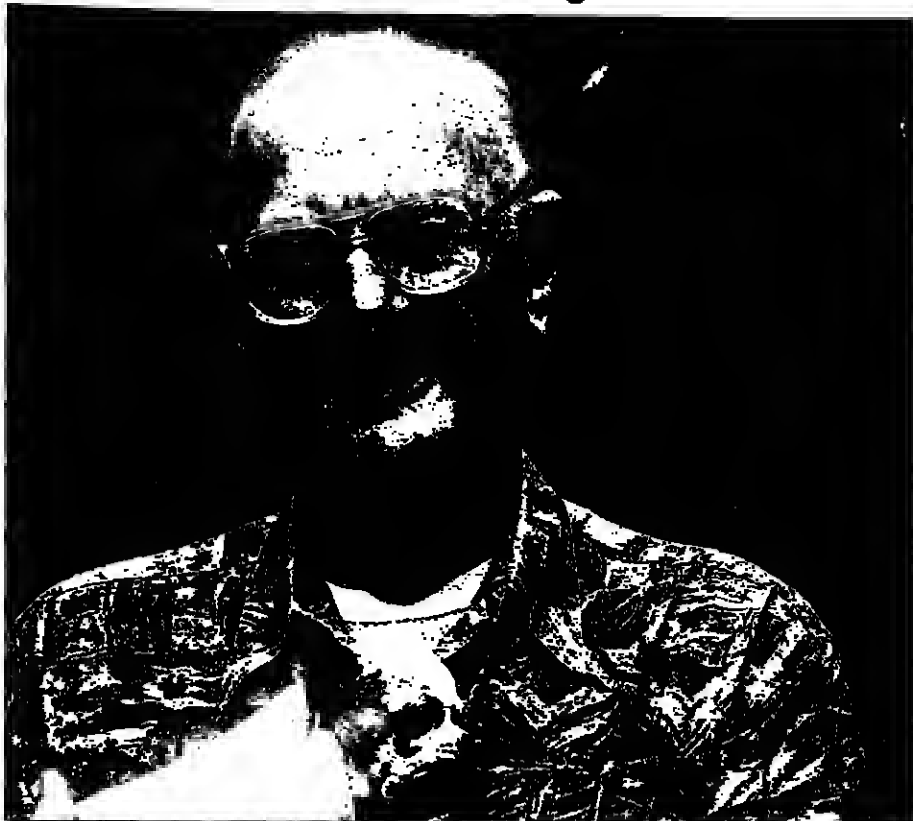


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Turned on by the Internet? Not the high priest of hi-tech



Unplugged: Arthur Clarke lives quietly in Sri Lanka with his dogs. Photograph: Dieter Ludwig

TIM MCGIRK
Colombo

The two squirrel-sized Chihuahua dogs curled beside Arthur C. Clarke, science-fiction writer, cyber-hermit and visionary – leapt off their cushion and yapped viciously. "If you stand perfectly still, they won't attack," laughed a voice from behind a battery of computers, video-telephones and electronic gadgets that would be the envy of a *Star Trek* captain.

"Forgive me for not standing up, but I have a kind of polio. Hurts like hell, sometimes," said Dr Clarke, his Somerset twang still intact after living on his Indian Ocean island retreat of Sri Lanka for nearly 40 years. He is 79 and wears a tropical sarong. Visitors are requested to enter barefoot into his space-age study, as if it were a temple of science, and Dr Clarke is high priest.

The Clarke reliquary boasts a moon rock, a spoon twisted by Uri Geller, and a Christmas card from long-haired Steve Wozniak, co-founder of the Apple computers group, from the early days soon after the machines took

shape in a back garage. Dr Clarke's two dogs bounded off their pillow and pounced, barking furiously.

"You know, it won't be too long before no home is without its own miniature Tyrannosaurus Rex as a guard dog," said Dr Clarke. He explains, "I'm a part owner of a Tyrannosaurus Rex egg from China. It's in quite good condition. We're scanning it for the DNA sequence. Someday, it may be possible to recreate the T-Rex from DNA. Just like in *Jurassic Park*."

Dr Clarke, more than most people, has need of a trained dinosaur pet to keep away intruders. As the man who first dreamed up telecommunication satellites exactly 50 years ago, Dr Clarke now finds himself desperately wanting to unplug himself. "I'm thinking of a new book title: 'Only Dis-Connect'," he chuckled.

Even on remote Sri Lanka, he is being deafened by a cacophony of requests from UFO-seekers, mad inventors, film-makers, novice writers and sci-fi fans of his 70-odd books. On the Internet, the many web sites and fan clubs devoted to Dr Clarke are a

favourite haunt for cyber-cruisers. It is possible to access his old interviews, circa 1983, before the advent of Internet, in which he predicts "briefcase-sized computers" and companies with "no offices, but a telephone number and space rented inside the memories of computers". Yet Dr Clarke guards his own e-mail address on the Internet as zealously as the number of a Swiss bank account.

"I've avoided networking like the plague. I'm terrified. It would be like drinking from Niagara Falls. The flow just wouldn't stop," he said. Modern man is in danger of falling victim to "an information overload", he claimed. "There's too much information pollution. You can imagine that with Rupert Murdoch planning to have 500 television channels for viewers, soon, we'll need programmes just to enable us to find our way through all this."

In many ways, a conversation with Dr Clarke is like having a television with 500 channels and a jammed remote control button that switches stations every half-second. His mind ranges across a galaxy of different subjects: the Voyager

space probe, a message that he might send to future colonists of Mars, how Steven Spielberg has "optioned" a Dr Clarke story of a comet slamming into earth, how he received a fan letter from Tom Hanks, the star of *Apollo 13* – all this in a single burst.

Every few minutes he breaks off, like the Mad Hatter at the Tea Party, to look at his watch. He has ideas to expand, new planets to colonise. "Goodness, I can't talk any longer. The BBC are coming to film me. Next week I'll become a virtual Arthur Clarke," he said. In many ways, he has already become virtual reality, with polio crippling him, Dr Clarke has taken refuge in the electronic dimensions: on CD-Rom, the Internet and, for special conferences, on visual satellite link-ups with NASA scientists and futurists around the world.

In one recent link-up with the British Interplanetary Society, Dr Clarke mused about extraterrestrial life. "We have had television for 50 years, therefore a volume of space containing several hundred suns has been filled with news of our wars, our atrocities and our crimes – real

ones and fictional ones, which an alien intelligence might have great difficulty in distinguishing. I conclude that there is no, repeat no, superior civilisation in our immediate vicinity. For if there was, their cops would already be here, sirens screaming across the radio spectrum."

War has engulfed Dr Clarke's tropical Eden of Sri Lanka. When he arrived on this island in the Fifties on a diving expedition, it was a emerald-green utopia. Many of its peaks are crowned by ancient Buddhist ruins, and the view stretched the imagination of a visionary like Dr Clarke, enabling him to gaze as far into the future as he could into the past.

Today, Sri Lanka is divided by ethnic wars between the Tamils and Sinhalese. Suicide bombers stalk Colombo, and it is not safe for Dr Clarke, the island's most famous "resident guest" to venture out.

"If a civilisation can't advance technically without corresponding moral progress, it will self-destruct," he once said. As he walked round the garden, one dog bit him, drawing blood. At that moment he was glad they were not T-Rexes.

Australian eyes top UN post

For a man who is quick to note that there is, as yet, "no vacancy" at the top of the United Nations, Gareth Evans, Australia's Foreign Minister, is remarkably fluent in his diagnosis of the UN's weakness and his own proposals to shake it up.

Mr Evans, 51, found an attentive audience this week at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, where his recommendations came as the UN ended its Bosnia mission. Mr Evans, Foreign Minister since 1988, is spoken of in some quarters as an ideal figure to replace the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 73, next year. Australia's Labor government faces election defeat next year and Mr Evans may be spending more time with his family by then.

But Dr Boutros-Ghali, to the dismay of many of the big powers, is giving every indication he wishes to stand for a second five-year term. "Look, I'm a healthy realist about it," said Mr Evans in an interview. If the Secretary-General runs again, he obviously reckons there is little chance to dislodge him.

Yet Mr Evans is not a man to cloak his feelings in diplomatic urbanities. Like most Western governments, he thinks people at the top of the UN should serve only one term. "It's debilitating in any international organisation when towards the end of the first term the person has to turn his sights to-

wards what's necessary to get another one," he said. "A single seven-year term is the best way to address that."

Having thus indirectly deplored Dr Boutros-Ghali's aspirations, Mr Evans runs briskly through the need to scale down



Evans: Would like to head UN but has powerful enemies

the absurd trappings of protocol attached to the post and to impose order on what he terms "the hopelessly unco-ordinated" UN hierarchy. He thinks the Secretary-General should be more like the chief executive officer of a multinational and less like a minor head of state, and would like to see four deputies, to impose order on more than 40 agencies and departments that report at present to the Secretary-General. He believes the Security

Council "no longer represents the international community" and should be expanded to include as permanent members Japan, Germany and perhaps some big developing countries. He has headed proposals for UN work in peace-keeping, development and administration that should attract Western industrialised countries and developing nations.

But his manner may also act to his disadvantage. Australia's reaction to French nuclear tests in the Pacific has probably ensured a veto from Paris against any Australian candidate for the top UN job. And Mr Evans is hardly less scathing about Britain's attitude to the nuclear issue, so he has displeased two nuclear powers which are permanent members of that "unrepresentative" Security Council. Undaunted, Mr Evans was yesterday telling the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, of the "spectacular insensitivity" inherent in the last Anglo-French declaration reaffirming the value of nuclear deterrence. The nuclear powers must "get absolutely serious" about disarmament, he believes.

It may be doubted whether the big powers would, in the end, turn out to prefer the articulate Mr Evans to the circumlocutory Dr Boutros-Ghali.

Korean presidents face charges

Seoul (Reuters) — Two former South Korean presidents, Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo, were formally charged yesterday for their roles in a bloody 1979 coup. They face the death penalty if convicted.

Mr Chun, who was moved to a police hospital on Wednesday, having been on hunger strike since his arrest on 3 December, was charged with mutiny for masterminding the coup, which was followed in May 1980 by an army massacre of pro-democracy rebels in the city of

Kwangju. Mr Roh was charged with playing a "key role" by pulling troops under his command off the North Korean border to back the putsch leaders.

Both were also charged with murder and attempted murder for attacks on superior officers, and with ordering military units to be mobilised without proper authorisation.

Political analysts believe the disgraced former presidents will receive long prison sentences, likely to be commuted. The Yonhap news agency

said Mr Chun would also be indicted for corruption around 29 January. Mr Roh's trial on separate charges of accepting \$369m (£240m) in bribes started on Monday. He admitted taking money from businessmen during his 1988-93 term, but said he could not remember from whom or when.

President Kim Young Sam has vowed to "put history to rights", and this week parliament passed a special law to open the way to legal action against his predecessors.

Fears for Panchen Lama's safety

The Dalai Lama says he is "really concerned about the poor boy's safety," referring to six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, son of a Tibetan nomadic herdsman. The boy, whom he named earlier this year as the 11th Panchen Lama, has not been seen since July. Meanwhile, the rival six-year-old recently chosen by China, Gyaisa Norbu, has performed his first "official" duties.

"Perhaps he is the youngest political prisoner," the Dalai Lama said of little Gedhun. He also feared for the lives of the boy's parents and those of the Buddhist monks who support him, he added.

China's choice presided over a two-hour ceremony last Friday at the Tashi Lhunpo monastery, in Shigatse, west of Lhasa. There, monks and the faithful paid homage to the alleged reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama – the second-highest figure in Tibetan Buddhism – who died in 1989. Tibetan exiles say most people will support the boy chosen by the Dalai Lama.

During the ceremony, the boy prayed, accepted gifts of coloured grain, blessed monks

and presented *hadus* – long white scarves – to the temple's huge Mayvuri Buddha statue. He also visited the hall for the founder of the Yellow Sect of Buddhism, and the *stupas* for the 10th, 9th and 4th Panchen Lamas. Security around the Dalai Lama is being stepped up in the Himalayan town of Dharamsala after three people were arrested for allegedly spying on the spiritual leader.

Luciano Pavarotti singing the blues? He may well be. The Italian tenor has received an unpleasant Christmas gift from the Belgian authorities: a bill for \$33,000 (£22,000) in unpaid taxes. Belgian newspapers say the money is due from concerts Pavarotti gave in the country five years ago.

From California, the state that gave the world such political greats as Congressman Richard ("I am not a crook") Nixon and Congressman Sonny ("I got you, babe") Bono, comes Janique Kilheary ("I am a lady") Goff-Madison. Known as Mistress Madison,

Well, maybe just one joke: Congresswoman Pat Schroeder of Colorado points out that Newt Gingrich's approval ratings have fallen so low lately that his supporters are now fewer than the number of people who believe Elvis Presley is still alive.

Maryann Bird

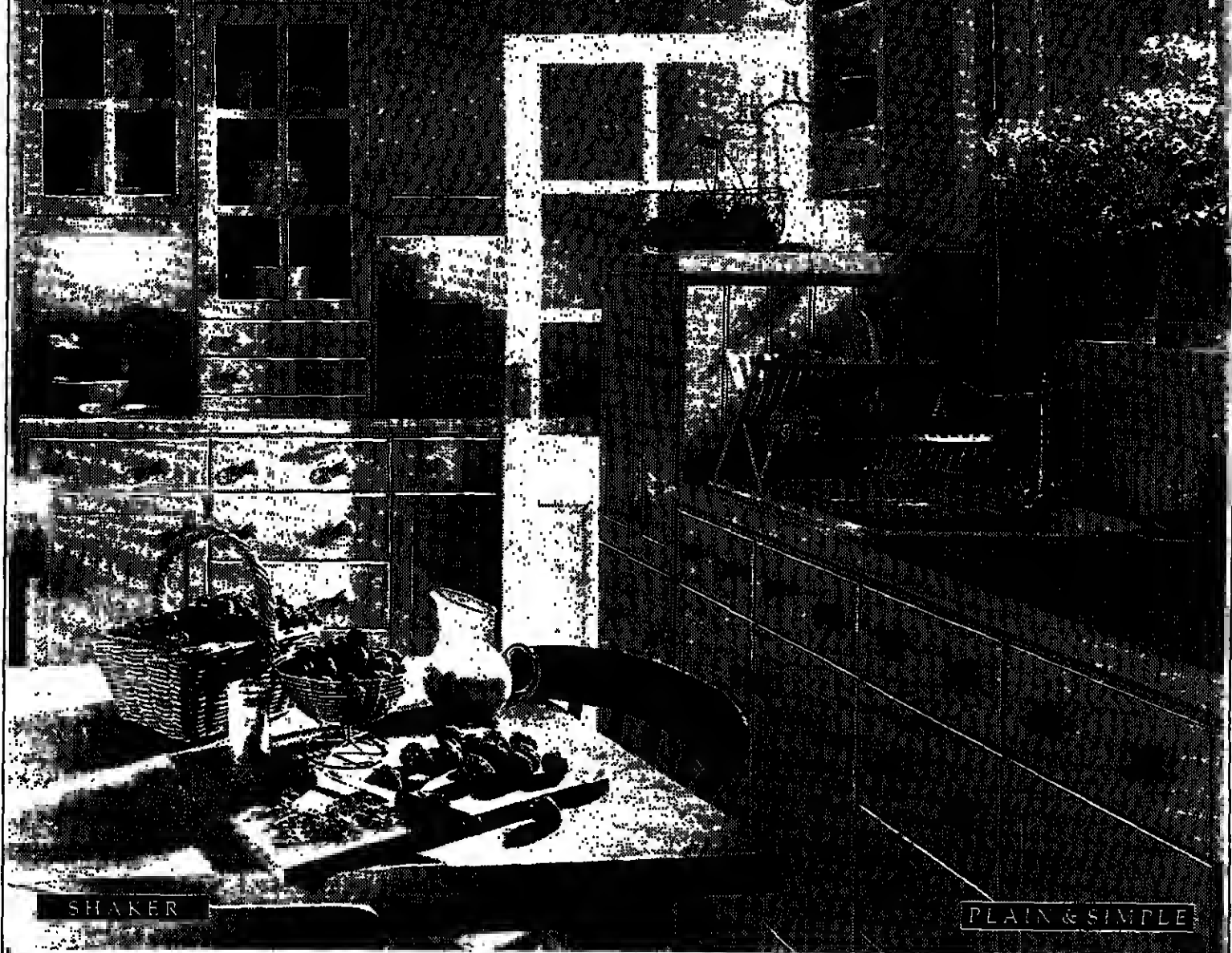
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IN 1

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obituaries / gazette

Dame Nita Barrow

The designation "The People's Governor-General" has been adopted by Barbadians to describe Dame Nita Barrow, the first woman Governor-General of Barbados, who took office in 1991. The title commemorates all the human attributes which the nation came to associate with its most distinguished citizen.

Nita Barrow was the second of five children, one of whom was Errol Barrow, a former Prime Minister of Barbados, founder of the present opposition party and architect of independence. She was a member of the family group of O'Neil Barrow and Springer, which in three generations produced, besides Errol Barrow, Charles Springer, the founder of Scouting in Barbados; Dr Duncan O'Neil, the political leader and Gold Medalist of Edinburgh University; Sir Hugh Springer, the trade unionist and Nita Barrow's predecessor as Governor-General; and Christopher Springer, the distinguished mathematician and attorney-at-law.

Having completed a basic training in nursing, Nita Barrow undertook further study at the School of Nursing of Toronto University, with the support of a Rockefeller Fellowship. She later continued her training with specialist study at the Royal College of Nursing of Edinburgh University in 1951-52 and at Columbia University in 1962-63. Her period of service as Instructress at the West Indies School of Public Health in Jamaica in 1945-50 was quickly followed by appointments to posts of local and regional responsibility in the Nursing and Public Health fields as the first West Indian Matron of the University College Hospital in 1951 and the first Principal Nursing Officer of Jamaica in 1956.

From 1964, Barrow's service to the West Indies region was expanded when she became the director of a research project in nursing in the Commonwealth Caribbean. This project resulted in the re-organisation and upgrading of training of nurses in the region, and led subsequently to the introduction of Advanced Studies in Nursing at the University of the West Indies.

Barrow's service to the Caribbean region was matched by her international service through the World YWCA, which began when she attended the 1951 Council in Beirut. Her appointment as Associate Director of the Christian Medical Commission (CMC) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1971 and as Director four years later provided her with the opportunity to lead and promote primary health care and direct Western thinking towards recognition of, and respect for, traditional medicine and its practitioners.

Her purposeful involvement in advancing the status of women was never separate from her professional interests, so that it became almost impossible to separate her voluntary service from that of her profession. Barrow's travels to very many countries as Director of the CMC of the WCC, as World President of the YWCA and as President of the International Council of Adult Education also provided an opportunity for her to assist in improving the status of women.

Her practice of genuine equality of treatment of all people put others at their ease whether she was at the 125th anniversary of the YWCA (UK),

or sharing minimal accommodation and comfort while visiting a rural outpost of primary health care several miles south of Khartoum. Her success as convenor of the conference marking the end of the UN Decade for Women (1985) most certainly led to her being nominated as the only woman on the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) set up to visit South Africa (1986) and "encourage through all practicable ways the evolution of [that] necessary process of political change".

That within eight years Barrow was able to participate in the celebration of democracy as a way of life in South Africa was one of her most precious memories. So-called retirement from professional and vocational service, having made her available as a member of the EPG, also led to the call for her native Barbados to serve as its Permanent Representative at the United Nations, where one of her first addresses was on the status of women. As an active member of Unifem and similar women's organisations, Barrow's counsel was sought world-wide. Her dutiful answer in 1990 to the call for that is what it was, by the people of Barbados to be their Governor-General appeared to make her more available to the world.

Such involvement increased her sensitivity to duty as a "world citizen" and the need for her to project into her own island state equality, tolerance and caring, all-essential ingredients for national unity, particularly in occasional times of unease.

Barrow's most recent international involvement included that with the 21st Century Leadership Programme (Lead), the Conference of Environment and Development (Ecodev) in 1992, followed by the Conference of



Barrow: 'world citizen'

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (1994). Her last international meetings were associated with the 50th anniversary of the UN when she chaired the committee to select 50 communities around the world which have used innovative methods to improve the quality of life.

Woodie Blackman

Ruth Nita Barrow, nurse and public servant, born Barbados 15 November 1916; Sister Tutor, Kingston School of Nursing, Jamaica 1952-54; Matron, UCH, Jamaica 1954-56; Principal Nursing Officer, Jamaica 1956-63; World Health Organisation nursing adviser, Caribbean Area 1964-71; associate director, Medical Commission, World Council of Churches 1971-75; director 1975-81; DA 1980, GCMG 1990; FRCS 1980; ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations 1986-90; Governor-General of Barbados 1990-95; died Bridgetown, Barbados 19 December 1995.



Heroic quality: Genevois as Joan in La Merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d'Arc, 1929 Photograph: BFI

Simone Genevois

In 1927, a film about Joan of Arc went into production in France which, under the direction of Carl Dreyer, was financed by the same company that had made *Napoleon*. They hoped for a similar epic about France's national heroine. Dreyer spent their money on huge sets which he never showed; he produced an avant-garde film largely photographed in bold close-ups. It was not a commercial success, but its critical reputation, increasing over the years, obliterated another film on Joan of Arc, made at roughly the same time, *La Merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, directed by Marco de Gastyne.

Dreyer's actress, Falconetti, gave a mesmerising performance of sanctity and suffering, but could that same woman have led the forces of France against the English? Simone Genevois, in the film by de Gastyne, had just that heroic quality, and her performance was one of the wonders of the silent cinema.

Alas, the film was lost for many years, and when it was restored it was shown only once in England at the National Film Theatre (in a season organised by John Gillett). Those who saw it were astonished by the scale of the production, particularly the battle scenes, where Simone Genevois led 8,000 extras from the French army against the ramparts of Carcassonne (standing in with Aigues-Mortes for Orleans). "In the beginning," said Genevois, "I was 15 years old and they made me a very light suit of armour, but I ended up with real armour. At the Battle of Orleans I had to wear a 22-kilo suit of chain mail. As soon as I finished a scene, they would lay me down and I would sleep on the ground because I couldn't take the weight."

The trial scenes were filmed almost as starkly as the Dreyer film (which neither Genevois nor her director had yet seen) in the medieval Abbey of Mont St Michel. The execution, the only scene to be shot at the Joinville studio, was equally

realistic - perhaps too much so. "The moment the wood caught fire I yelled 'It burns!'" Marco was so sure that I was afraid that he did nothing at all. All of a sudden the cameraman, Gaston Brun, shouted 'She's burning!' and everyone ran towards me, because I was tied up and couldn't budge. I was very frightened."

Simone Genevois was born in working-class Mennilmontant, in Paris, in 1912. At the age of four she posed for photographic postcards and that same year played an orphan in a six-part *Eclair* crime serial, *Projet ou les Mystères de Malmont* (1917). Almost immediately, she was given her own series of films, produced by *Eclair* and shot in the South of France, at Cannes. She became one of the first French child stars of the post-war period.

"She specialised in melodrama," said the historian Lenny Borger, "in which she was often orphaned, kidnapped or abandoned. She did a lot of crying, which is why she told me 'I don't cry at any more!'"

Her first important film was Henri Poullet's monumental eight-hour serial *Travail* (1919), based on Zola and shot in the steel works of Le Creusot. She played the daughter of Ivan Mosjoukine, the White Russian star of French films, in Alexander Volkoff's superlative *La Maison du mystère* (1921-22), a 10-part serial which was recently restored by Renée Lichting for the Cinéma de France - a restoration which, despite its remarkably high standard, has never been shown publicly anywhere, not even at the exhibition of the Russian film-makers in France at Montreuil, which closed on 21 December.

By the time she was cast as one of Bonaparte's sisters in Abel Gance's *Napoleon* - in 1925 - Simone Genevois was a veteran with eight years' acting behind her. To her regret, however, a scene in which she wept at the feet of Salicetti (Philippe Heriati) was cut by Gance from

the final film. However, it was Heriati (a Goncourt prize-winning novelist as well as actor) who secured for her the role she will be remembered by.

She did not correspond to the requirements demanded in the national casting competition for Joan of Arc: "I did not have a sturdy peasant build, nor dark hair - I was as blonde as a wheatfield - nor did I know how to ride a horse." But Heriati told de Gastyne of this girl who had worked in the business for years yet was the right age. It took nearly two years to make the film, so vast was the scale, and it was rewarded - like *Napoleon* - with a premiere at the Opéra. But by the time the film was released, in 1929, sound was the rage and, like so many great films of the late silent era, it was overwhelmed by all the exciting new talkies.

Simone made a few sound films - including a couple for de Gastyne - but they failed to make an impression and she left the movies after *Quand les feuilles tombent* in 1935. She had worked 18 years in the film business. She was still only 23. *La Merveilleuse vie de Jeanne d'Arc* was reissued in the 1930s on 17.5mm, a gauge which quickly became obsolete. Owners of 9.5mm home movie projectors could see some of the spectacular scenes in a two-reel presentation called *St Jean - the Maid*. It was not until 1982 when Simone Genevois and her husband André Conti personally underwrote the restoration of the 35mm version - achieved by Renée Lichting, doyenne of film restorers - that audiences could see the film in its entirety.

Ironically, Genevois first met Conti at the premiere of her version of Joan of Arc. He turned out to have been an investor in the Dreyer version.

Kevin Brownlow

Simone Genevois, actress: born Paris 13 February 1912; married 1931 Jacques Puthé (marriage dissolved); secondly André Conti (one son); died Arcione, Switzerland 16 December 1995.

Lord Jacques



Jacques: practical socialist

Lord Jacques was a most distinguished product of the Co-operative Movement. As a leader he ranked with Earl Alexander of Hillsborough, though they could not have been more different in character and style.

John Jacques was born in 1905 at Ashington in Northumberland, where he started work with the local co-operative society. A scholarship took him to the Co-operative College in Manchester, then a small training establishment for prospective managers and secretaries. His success there gained him an appointment as secretary-manager to the small Moorsley Society in 1925. He returned to the college in 1929 as a tutor, having added a degree in commerce to his other qualifications.

Jacques taught accountancy to many students, including thousands who studied by post. The Co-operative Movement employed over a quarter of a million workers between the wars and they were encouraged, at all levels, to study for promotion. During these years Jacques wrote three textbooks on book-keeping which are still the standard works for co-operative practice.

His career changed decisively in 1942 when he joined the large Plymouth Society as accountant, but it was in 1945, on appointment as chief officer to the Portsea Island Society, that his legendary success began.

Portsmouth had been heavily bombed during the Second World War and much of the society's property had been destroyed or damaged. An intensive and prolonged period of rebuilding took place under Jacques's direction. He developed a direct labour force and a shopfitting service within the Portsea Island Society. Despite serious shortages of materials the society's assets were not merely restored, but added to in an imaginative way.

Jacques saw the advantages of self-service methods in food retailing, but he avoided small-

er units, then prevalent in many co-operatives, in favour of medium-sized shops, where the best economies in operating costs were then to be had, as his results proved. This policy was phenomenally successful, and dividend on purchases returned to members rose to 8 per cent. Depreciation and reserve requirements were met in full and a bonus on wages introduced.

Like all Portsea retailers Jacques had a nose for property, and he acquired development land in key areas, especially for dairy, bakery and transport operations, as well as new stores.

The success of the Portsea Island Society became the measuring rod for British and overseas co-operatives. When Jacques retired in 1965, it was to become unpaid chairman of the Co-operative Union (the movement's trade advisory body). He was a stimulating national leader until retiring in 1970. His books on management accounting and practice were published (*Management Accounting and Manual on Co-operative Management*) at this time.

Jacques was created a life peer in 1968. He served as a government whip from 1974 to 1977 and again in 1979. In the Lords he spoke on Treasury, trade and employment matters. He practised great economy in all things, not least the written and spoken word, but he

adjusted to the style of the Lords and became an influential member, in and out of office. The Labour Party discovered him late, which was the Co-operative Movement's gain. Jacques did not neglect public service. He was a magistrate in Portsmouth from 1951 to 1973. He presided over the Co-operative Congress in 1961, delivering from memory, an address which inspired all who heard it. In particular he commended consumer co-operation, not merely for the return of profit to members, but because it created collectively owned capital gains. At the same time he chided the retail societies who own the Co-operative Wholesale Society for their extravagance in making the CWS incur needless cost in selling goods to its owners.

There was a friendly and unhelpful quality to Lord Jacques. He readily assisted all who called upon him for advice and remained a teacher all his life. Much of what should have been leisure time was spent advising societies for no reward. The Co-operative Movement, which he regarded as an example of practical socialism, absorbed him throughout his long years. The *Guardian* never left him and neither did his sense of humour.

John Galloway

John Henry Jacques, retailer and politician: born Ashington, Northumberland 11 January 1905; tutor, Co-operative College 1929-42; accountant, Plymouth Co-operative Society 1942-45; chief executive, Portsea Island Co-operative Society 1945-65; president, Co-operative Congress 1961; chairman, Co-operative Union 1964-70; created 1968 Baron Jacques; president, Retail Trades Education Council 1971-75; Lord-in-Waiting 1974-77; Deputy Chairman of Committees, House of Lords 1977-85; married 1929 Constance White (died 1987; two sons, one daughter), 1989 Violet Jacques (née Davies); died Portsmouth 20 December 1995.

Billy Marsh

Billy Marsh was a Kent farmer's son who rose to become a British show-business legend and the most respected agent in Europe.

He was far from the cliché figure of the large, fast-talking, cigar-smoking and wheeler-dealing agent. He was slim, thin-haired, bespectacled, soberly dressed and quietly spoken. But he had an outstanding talent for spotting future stars and judging public taste. He looked more like a benign bishop - yet he presented almost 100 royal charity shows.

For 35 years he was the first lieutenant to Bernard, later Lord, Deffont, and as managing director of the light entertainment division of London Management was responsible for top-of-the-bill performers including Morecambe and Wise, Frankie Vaughan, Tony Hancock, Harry Harkness, Norman Wisdom and Bruce Forsyth.

He lived for show business, and among his credits were a

leading backstage role in booking and preparing the annual Royal Variety Performance, booking London's then no 1 nightspot, *The Talk of the Town*, taking a Palladium variety show to Canada annually, presenting the British tour of Bette Davis and Laurel and Hardy, as well as mounting his own shows.

Five years ago his busy life came to a sudden end when he suffered a stroke, which eventually left him in a wheelchair. He virtually retired.

On leaving London Management in 1987 he had formed a new agency, Billy Marsh Associates, which today is run by Jan Kennedy and looks after Forsyth, the Morecambe and Wise estate, Rolf Harris, Marti Webb and David Jacobs. His story was told on *This is Your Life* in 1990 (he was noted in the business for his cigarette smoking and ash on his coat lapels).

Reviewing his 47 years' association with stage, television, radio, film and cabaret he told me: "I hope my name stands for integrity and I claim to be the equal of any competitor. The public are the masters and I am allowed to continue because I have been right more often than wrong."

"My family had no connection with entertainment but it hypnotised me and I would cycle 18 miles as a boy to visit the live theatre. I was stage-struck and can recall every act on the bills. My connection began at £1 a week, as secretary for a touring show. Eventually I succeeded the late Richard Afton as manager of another show. He

had earned £12 a week, more than me, and I asked why. They told me it was because his title had been 'general manager'."

Billy Marsh made his name when he joined the newly started Bernard Deffont in 1942 and looked after his agency. The pianist Charlie Kuz was his introduction to star management. It was later, in 1960, that Morecambe and Wise walked into his office looking for work. Marsh told them to concentrate on television and fixed for them to have their own series. As a young man he had himself appeared on stage. He was a "straight man" who also did impressions.

He had seen music hall and the clubs and television and the resulting industry take over the job of producing the new stars. In his view, "Nothing can stop a star from emerging, even if it takes longer. Too much mediocre talent thinks it should be at the top. You can count the real top stars quickly, and you won't need two hands. Some of the finest I've seen are Max Miller, America's Harry Richman, Sid Field, Eric and Ernie, Forsyth, Grace Fields and Frankie Vaughan."

"I wouldn't trade my work for anything," he said. "It is also a matter of pride that I'm told I have been associated with more royal shows than any agent or manager in the history of light entertainment."

James Green

William Marsh, show-business agent: born Whitfield, Kent 1917; died London 19 December 1995.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

CITIBELL: To Jane (née French) and Michael, a son, Christopher James Thomas, on 7 December 1995.

KOHN: To Sue and Mark, a son, Teodor Matthias, 5th Jan (3.78kg), on 17 October 1995, at St Mary's Paddington.

DEATHS

HOOKING: (family). On 18 December 1995, aged 95 years, sometime Canon of Manchester Cathedral. Husband of the late Molly, father of John, Mary and the late Margaret, grandfather of Robin and Lucy. Funeral service at St Martin on the Hill, Scarborough, at 12.30pm on Friday 29 December 1995. Prior to cremation. Family flowers only. Donations for Mencap. Further enquiries to B. Bernard & Sons, Funeral Directors, 13 Prospect Road, Scarborough YO12 7JP.

IN MEMORIAM

CHRIST-FISHER: Alasdair, died 22 December 1986. Much loved and often thought of by his friends.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment march the Queen's Life Guard in Horse Guards, Whitehall, London. The Queen's Guard, Queen's Guard in Buckingham Palace, 11 March. News provided by the Irish Gazette.

Birthdays

Air Chief Marshal Sir John Aiken, 74; Lady Archer of Weston-Super-Mare, Chairman, National Energy Foundation, 51; Sir Douglas Brown, High Court judge, 64; Mr Robin Corbett MP, 62; Viscount Davidson, former Captain of the Queen's Guard, 67; Mr Noel Edmunds, television presenter, 47; Mr Maurice Gibb, member of the Bee Gees, 46; Mr Robin Gibb, member of the Bee Gees, 46; Miss Patricia Hayes, actress, 86; Mrs Karin Jonzen, sculptor, 81; Dr Judith McClure, Headmistress, St George's School, Edinburgh, 50; Mr Trevor Morris, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, 61; Mr Chris Old, former England cricketer, 47; The Rev Lord Sandford, former government minister, 78; Lord Sprot, former Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, 86; The Duke of Westminster, Chancellor, Manchester Metropolitan University, 44; Mr Ken Whitmore, playwright, 56; Sir Percival Worthington, journalist, 72.

Anniversaries

Births: William Hulse White ("Mark Rutherford"), novelist, 1831; John Nevil Maskelyne, stage magician, 1839; Giacomo Antonio Domenico Michele Secondo Maria Puccini, operatic composer, 1858. Deaths: George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), novelist, 1880; Nathaniel West (Nathan Wallenstein Weinstein), novelist, 1949; Helen Beatrix Potter, author and artist, 1943; Richard Frederick Dainton, television com-

mentator, 1965. On this day: the first pantomime in England was staged at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre, 1716; Alfred Dreyfus was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment on Devil's Island, 1895; the Ministry of Pensions was first set up, 1916; a Pan American jumbo jet crashed on the tarmac of Lockerbie in Scotland, killing all 259 passengers and crew, and 11 people on the ground, 1988. Today is the Feast Day of St Cherebron and Others, St Flavian of Tuscany, St Ischyron and St Zeno.

Christenings

Lady Amelia Windsor
Lady Amelia Windsor, daughter of the Earl and Countess of St Andrews, was christened Amelia Sophia Theodora Mary Margaret yesterday, by the Rev William Booth, Sub-Dean of HM Chapel Royal, St James's Palace. The Hon Georgina Stonor, Lord Ralph Kerr, Mrs Jack Hanbury-Jenkinson and the Hon Anthony Jones were the Godparents.

Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 3.30pm.

United Synagogue: 0171-387 4360. Federation of Synagogues: 0181-202 2363. Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 0171-589 1665. Reform Synagogues of Great Britain: 0181-349 4731. Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation: 0171-289 2573. New London Synagogue (Masorti): 0171-328 1826.

Ministers' speeches admissible to show purpose of Act

LAW REPORT

22 December 1995

Three Rivers District Council and others v Bank of England

(No 2); Queen's Bench Division (Mr Justice Clarke); 27 November 1995

The court was entitled to admit in evidence parliamentary materials such as speeches by ministers, not only to help it construe a particular statutory provision whose meaning was ambiguous or unclear, but also in a case where the purpose or object of the statute as a whole, rather than any particular provision, was in issue.

Mr Justice Clarke granted an application made by the plaintiffs, Three Rivers District Council and 6,018 other depositors of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International SA (BCCI) (now in liquidation), during a preliminary hearing in their action against the Bank of England over its alleged failure properly to supervise BCCI's activities.

The plaintiffs' application was for leave to refer to speeches made by the Minister of State at the Treasury on 23 November 1978 when moving the second reading of the Bill which

became the Banking Act 1979, and by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury on 28 November 1986 when moving the second reading of the Bill which became the Banking Act 1987.

The plaintiffs sought to rebut the Bank of England's argument that the 1979 and 1987 Acts were not intended to impose on the Bank of England an obligation to protect depositors from negligence, impropriety or dishonesty on the part of credit institutions, and to show that that was indeed the intention of Parliament in passing those Acts.

The Bank of England referred to *Pepper v Hart* [1993] AC 593 and *Mellish v BMI* (No 3) Ltd [1995] STC 964 as authority for the proposition that parliamentary materials were admissible only where 1) the question in issue was the true construction of a provision in the relevant statute; 2) that provision was ambiguous or obscure or its literal meaning led

to absurdity; or 3) the parliamentary materials were directed to the specific provision under consideration.

Sir Patrick Nall QC, David Vaughan QC, Dominic Dowling and Robin Dicker (Lloyd White Durrant) for the plaintiffs; Nicholas Sadler QC, Paul Laskov QC, Mark Phillips, Benjamin Thakli and Rhodri Thompson (Freshfields) for the Bank of England.

Mr Justice Clarke said that in both *Pepper v Hart* and *Mellish v BMI* the House of Lords was considering the construction of a particular statutory provision. It was not concerned with the case where the court might be considering the purpose or object of a statute for some other reason. It was also considering a purely domestic statute.

It did not necessarily follow that the principle applied so narrowly to a case where the purpose of the legislation was to introduce into English law the provisions of an international convention or European

directive, even where the question was one of construction; a fortiori to a case where the question was not one of construction.

In the light of the principles discussed in *Pickstone v Freemans plc* [1989] 1 AC 66 at 112, *Garland v British Rail Engineering Ltd* [1983] 2 AC 751 at 771, and *Lister v Forth Dry Dock & Engineering Co Ltd* [1990] 1 AC 546, it seemed that where the court was seeking to construe a statute purposively and consistently with any relevant European materials, including directives, it was of particular importance to ascertain the true purpose of the statute.

The plaintiffs argued that one of the purposes of the 1979 Act was to comply with the UK's obligation under EC Council Directive 77/780, and that in order to consider whether and to what extent that was so, reference should be made to the parliamentary materials.

It appeared that the object or purpose of the statutes might be material to a number of aspects of the preliminary issues which his Lordship was considering.

It was at least relevant to the Bank of England's submission, that it owed no duty to the plaintiffs, that Parliament had enacted two statutes neither of which contained an express duty, and one of which provided in effect that neither the bank nor its servants or agents should be liable for anything done or omitted to be done in the discharge or purported discharge of its functions under that Act, in the absence of bad faith (section 1(4) of the 1987 Act).

It also seemed that the purpose and object of the statutes might be relevant to the issues between the parties arising out of the 1977 Directive.

His Lordship accepted the plaintiffs' argument that he should look at the ministerial statements and concluded that nothing in the authorities prevented him doing so.

Paul Maganah, Barrister

Happy Christmas, turkey. It's your last

Once sacred, now stuffed

Frozen stiff and tightly packaged, the British turkey is selling in supermarkets this week for as little as 29p a pound. It seems an ignominious fate for a noble bird whose ancestors date back at least 2.5 million years. The Aztecs were the first to domesticate wild turkeys, but their standing in the ancient society was both sacred and sacrificial – something of a mixed blessing. The North American Indians took a more pragmatic approach, hunting turkeys for food and head-dress feathers. They believed the bird now served up to millions of families on Christmas Day represented self-sacrifice and caring for others.

The turkey first made its way to Britain in the late 16th century via Spain. It became established as a special dish for the rich – and quickly made its way into literature – Shakespeare refers to turkeys in *Twelfth Night* and *Henry V*. Henry VIII is thought to have been among the first aristocrats to forsake swan, peacock and even the magnificent boar's head in favour of the new arrival, which took the name of the turkey-cock, formerly used for the guinea fowl which hailed from Turkey. Within 12 years of its arrival, the first steps to mass consumption had begun with its price being halved to three shillings.

The birds were certainly one of the great spectacles of the time. Norfolk, now home to millions of Bernard Matthews's intensively reared turkeys, was already a main breeding area in the 17th century. The creatures have never had it easy. They were marched – in small leather boots or their claws tar-coated – hundreds of miles to London for market. The turkey drive's journey time was three months.

By the 17th century the turkey was the traditional food for Thanksgiving in North America. The Victorians introduced turkey as part of the British Christmas, along with Christmas trees and crackers. But goose was still the most popular – as in the rhyme "Christmas is coming. The goose is getting fat."

Until the 1960s the turkey still competed with the goose, chicken and roast beef for its place at the centre of the Christmas table. Before the war it was still largely a luxury dish. But the arrival of intensive farming methods and more widely available freezing facilities brought a revolution.

Tis a noble bird that graces the nation's dinner plates. Mary Braid and Danny Penman tell the story



Free as a bird? Not on the factory farm

Life for the average turkey is nasty, brutish and – at somewhere between nine and 21 weeks – short.

Turkey farmers only began large-scale intensive rearing in the Seventies, some 20 years after chicken producers, but by this year more than 90 per cent of the 35 million birds slaughtered in Britain were reared in factory farms.

The turkey business is relatively small, employing 7,000 compared with the 50,000 in the chicken trade. But the regime is depressingly familiar: the birds are kept in flocks of up to 25,000 in large, windowless sheds with automatic feeding, watering and ventilation, and minimal human contact. The Ministry of Agriculture recommends a maximum of four to eight turkeys per square metre in the sheds. But since there are no laws gov-

erning the welfare of poultry, farmers are free to optimise production by packing in the birds as densely as possible.

To reduce aggression among the birds, most producers keep the sheds in near darkness. Some slice off the birds' beaks, to prevent them from damaging each other during fights.

The birds have been bred selectively to grow as fast and as big as possible. Only those with the desired characteristics are used for breeding. Over the generations, the breeders have produced birds with big fleshy breasts that reach their slaughtering weight on an increasingly short timescale. Inevitably, many turkeys grow so fast that their legs cannot support their weight.

Those birds used for breeding suffer particularly from leg deformities and the enlarged breast of the males means they cannot mate naturally. So breeders masturbate the birds to collect semen with which they artificially inseminate the females.

Free-range turkeys generally have a better time of it. Although their housing is basic, they have access to the outdoors with natural light, green foods and some dirt to scratch around in.

If they are reared under the Soil Association's Organic label, then they will not be doped with "feed antibiotics", which help the birds digest and absorb their food better. "Traditional Farm Fresh" is another commonly used label, but the birds are often reared in intensive systems.

Accept no substitute

The British love of the big bird at Christmas shows few signs of waning. Turkey has dominated the Christmas market for at least a decade and consumption continues to rise. Competing supermarkets are practically giving the birds away this month to attract customers.

Much is made of the alternatives to Britain's festive fare. But duck, goose, pheasant, salmon and vegetarian nut roast – despite the best efforts of their industries – have not even ruffled King Turkey's feathers. Duck producers claim that their share of the Christmas market has gradually increased in recent years but are shy of providing figures. The goose – before turkey's reign, the British Christmas favourite, and still popular in France and Germany – is newly fashionable, after suffering near annihilation just a decade ago. Sales of the bird – linked naturally through breeding and hatching to the Christmas season – have increased fourfold to about 600,000.

Those who favour goose must deal with the vagaries of nature. For 1995 has brought a shortage of geese – the long, hot summer made geese lethargic and fewer eggs were hatched. Meanwhile, meat producers wrestle with the fallout from BSE. The Meat and Livestock Commission claims that until this year the Christmas joint was more than holding its own, but beef sales are down 15 per cent on this time last year.

And what of the trendy and adventurous gastronomes and the elite band of restaurants and country houses that serve them? At Gidleigh Park country house in Devon, the proprietor, Paul Henderson, says that roast turkey – free range, of course – complete with sage and onion, will be one of the main course choices on the Christmas Day menu, though venison and turbot are also offered. At Raymond Blanc's Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons, breast of turkey filled with chestnuts and walnuts stands alongside duckling and turbot. "In the past five years we have tried roast goose and sucking pig, but they just never got ordered," said Mr Henderson. "We have turkey because it is what our clients expect at Christmas."

Of course, adventurous Britons wanting a change could follow the example of the Swedes who eat boiled ham on Christmas Day, with a salad of herring, beetroot and potato. Or the Australians who barbecue exotic fish and prawns.

Will 'bootiful' burgers replace beef?

Mad cow disease has been a gift to the British turkey industry. Consumers are giving up beef in their droves – sales are currently down by about a quarter – and poultry producers are cashing in with new ranges of turkey products.

The market for whole turkeys is in decline – the bird is no longer seen as a luxury and in most people's minds it is associated solely with Christmas lunch. After years of battling, the industry has refocused its marketing away from trying to interest consumers in whole turkeys as a year-round meal and begun to develop new products from the flesh.

Less than a third of the 35 million birds slaughtered each year are now eaten during Christmas. Most of the rest get turned into turkey products and portions for consumption throughout the year. We have come a long way since Bernard Matthews introduced television audiences to his "bootiful" turkey roll.

Since then turkey burgers, breast strips, diced thighs and new cuts of meat for barbecues have all been designed to appeal to those fancying a change from beef, lamb, pork and chicken. To further increase consumption, producers are working with the rest of the food industry to create sauces and recipes for turkey.

While not overtly knocking their main rival, the turkey image-makers are working at replacing beef in as many recipes as possible in the public imagination. Turkey flesh, says Amanda Williams, spokeswoman for Sun Valley Poultry, tastes good in curries and casseroles. Turkey

mince is being used to replace beef in some school meals.

The intensively reared meat is cheap and it does not have an image problem. It is low in fat, high in protein and, according to the producers, few diseases lurk in the wings to infect man.

The industry's strategy seems to be working. Turkey is the fastest growing sector of the meat trade and is almost as big as the lamb business. Since 1980 turkey production has increased from 123,000 to 182,000 tonnes. And mainly thanks to the economies of scale of factory farming, the cost of turkey is rising much less than the rate of inflation.

While the intensively produced birds are so cheap, free-range turkey is unlikely to develop into anything other than a niche market. Supermarkets are selling intensively reared whole birds of 10lb weight for about £3 frozen or £10 fresh. A free-range bird of the same weight costs about £15. Small fluctuations in price can also hit the farmer hard, because of wafer-thin margins.

Fowl facts, turkey nuggets and more

- A wild turkey can fly at 50mph.
- In 1937 at Southfleet in Kent, a certain Mrs Cuckoo successfully bred a chuckey. Its father was a turkey, its mother was a chicken.
- What do you call a male turkey? A gobble.
- What do you call a gathering of turkeys? A rafter.
- What do the Turks call a turkey? An "American bird".
- Turkeys are said to grow fatter and more contented when they see the world in pink; breeders are advised to fit them with pink-tinted lenses.
- During rainstorms, turkeys have a habit of looking upwards with their mouths open. Many drown.
- The nest of the Australian bush turkey can weigh up to five tons.
- Creek Indians worshipped the turkey at their New Fire Festival with a turkey dance – original inspiration for the "Birdie Song".
- Shakespeare's greatest turkey line: "God's body, the turkeys in my panner are quite starved." (*Henry IV, Part I, Act II, scene ii, the first Carrier*). Unfortunately for the poet, the action takes place a century before the first turkeys came to Europe.



Caymans wash whiter

John Grisham, you're a naughty boy, and you shouldn't tell such terrible truths. That seems to be the implication of an indignant press release from the Cayman Islands Government, which has landed on my desk.



Grisham: wrong islands

Mr Grisham became very, very rich by telling stories which involved complex money-laundering operations and the Cayman Islands (mysterious banks, beaches and blondes, plucky heroes and

heroines). It is clear from reading Mr Grisham's novels that he has had to do some painstaking in-depth research, to experience the difficult life on the Cayman Islands firsthand. Readers of *The Firm* will recall that he wrote of the mafia gang: "They launder money like crazy... Most of it goes to those banks in the Caymans." However, he does sugar the pill, gushing: "Sand as white as sugar. Warm, clear water. Warm, beautiful women."

Now, though, I gather that Mr Grisham has been under a complete misapprehension about the Caymans' reputation.

The press release refers to what the islands' grandees delicately describe as "controversial confidentiality laws". But George McCarthy, the Cayman financial secretary, insists that there is no basis to the rumour that something is amiss with the Caymans' moral compass. On the contrary, he hopes that a recently published report "will put a stop to the speculation in some quarters that Cayman tolerates money-laundering."

In some quarters, indeed. That Mr Grisham, he should be ashamed of himself. And if he wants to find a good place for his best-selling villains to salt away some millions of tax-

free dollars for their evil ends, he'll just have to find another location.

Local hero

There was much applause for the community policeman at a public meeting at Woodseaves, Staffordshire, when the chairman of the police consultative committee asked the youngest child in the audience, Billy Stockton, if he knew the name of the local hobby. The young boy did, and the constable in question received hearty praise for having got to know the populace so well. Young Billy and his father, Community Constable Stockton, went home beaming, the applause ringing in their ears.

Christmas No 1

As reported here earlier this week, the Radio 3 Year of British Music and Culture managed to write Paul McCartney out of songwriting history. But reading through the station's report of the year, it emerges that it did also rediscover the odd forgotten composer. One who catches my eye is William Jackson of Exeter, an organist at Exeter Cathedral in the early 18th century, and his gorgeously titled choral work "Time has not thinn'd my flowing hair." The work begins with the line "Time has not thinn'd my

flowing hair. Nor bent me with his iron hand," and concludes "Please let me trifle life away, And sing of love 'ere I grow old, 'ere I grow old." It's Eagle Eye's outside bet for the Christmas number one.

Battle talk

Christmas Card watch: The Oxford nuclear physicist John Mahvey does not believe in going for the subtle innuendo when there is a nuclear sledgehammer to hand. The Save British Science Society of which he is secretary, and which is campaigning against government cuts, prints inside the card a letter from the Duke of Wellington to the Foreign Office during the Napoleonic wars in 1812.

The connection with the Duke's lengthy description of the costs involved in the march to Portugal and elementary particle physics is remote. But the Duke concludes by asking whether he is expected "to train an army of untrained British clerks in Spain for the benefit of the accountant and copy boys in London in perchance, 2. To see to it that the forces of Napoleon are driven out of Spain."

In case the analogy is unclear, the civil servants at the Office of Science and Technology are the accountants and copy boys, and the nuclear physicists the brave, put-upon footsolders.

Adie's choice

Kate Adie's ankle injury sustained on the war reporting front has affected neither her broadcasting nor literary appetites. Radio 4's *With Great Pleasure* were about to cancel Miss Adie's choice of reading to be broadcast on Christmas Day. But she insisted on recording it from her hospital bed, where her reading matter



Adie: light relief

consists of tracts on the Spanish Civil War and the Balkans with a little light relief from Colonel Gaddafi's Little Green Book.

Eagle Eye

Generation Why

by Tony Reeve and Steve Way



MEAN, I'D LOVE TO GO TO THE BALL, BUT IT'S TWO GRAND A HEAD, AND HAVE YOU GOT ANY IDEA WHAT A CONVERTIBLE PUMPKIN COSTS THESE DAYS? WHERE AM I GOING TO GET THAT SORT OF MONEY?



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INDEPENDENT

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Divorce is now the only answer

Divorce has to be the appropriate way to resolve the embittered marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales. It is, in the Britain of the mid-Nineties, nothing to be ashamed of or embarrassed about. Almost one in two marriages ends in divorce, which means that virtually all adults have direct or indirect experience of the process. The growing acrimony between the royal couple, fought out most spectacularly in their recent television programmes, is doing no one any good; neither the couple themselves, nor their sons, nor the Royal Family nor the British public. Divorce is how an ordinary couple would handle the situation and that is how the royals should do it.

Of course, the deal is not yet done:



Charles has agreed. Diana has not yet concurred. It is difficult to imagine her standing in the way of a divorce. In her now famous *Panorama* interview, she said she did not want a divorce but added that she awaited her husband's decision; that is now forthcoming. The only obstacles are surely the terms of any settlement. These concern money, housing, title and role.

The most difficult of these is the last. Ever since the relationship began to sour, the Royal Family has appeared grudging in its attitude towards Diana. One of the most authentic moments in the *Panorama* interview was when she described how the family had sought to marginalise and exclude her. That was a mistake then and it would be a mistake in the future. Much as some in the Royal Household might wish it, the Princess of Wales will not go away; she cannot be banished to outer darkness. On the contrary, she should be accorded a role appropriate to her status as the mother of the young princes and a public celebrity who enjoys immense popularity here and abroad.

It surely cannot be beyond the wit of our royal and political establishment to come up with a role for her which not only satisfies her wishes but also takes account of the popular view. Diana is a national asset, not a national liability. After *Panorama*, it seemed as if the will had finally been found to create such a role. Since then, there seems to have been further procrastination. Let there be no more.

In an important sense, the divorce will not only remove some of the causes of the bitterness between Charles and Diana, but also clarify the position of the monarchy. Diana will never become Queen. The messy scenario of the feuding couple continuing their warfare from the vantage point of Buckingham Palace has still been banished for ever. Charles can still be King and probably will be. Yesterday he stated that it is not his intention to remarry. If he stands by that, there is no constitutional obstacle in the way of

him becoming King and Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Even if he subsequently changes his mind, it is likely that the Church will make the necessary changes to its canon law.

So far so good. No one, however, should imagine that the travails of the Royal Family are somehow at an end when Charles and Diana divorce. Diana will remain part of the equation, first and foremost because she is the mother of a future king. She will continue to be a public figure, however the vexed question of her future role is resolved. But of what kind? Prior to *Panorama*, Diana wore the mantle of the wronged and wounded wife. In that interview she moved on to new ground and assumed the role of critic of the Royal Family. She revealed the way in which she had been ostracised by the Windsors during her postnatal depression and subsequent bulimia and how, since the break-up, the "enemy" had tried to belittle her. It was not a pretty picture.

She went further. She suggested, hesitantly and tentatively, that the Royal Family needed to make itself more accessible and less isolated. In so doing she enjoined the public debate about the nature of the monarchy and its future. Who would have thought, even two years ago, that the reformers would soon welcome to their ranks the wife of the future king? It is unclear how Diana will comport herself over the next few years. She may, assisted by a benign response from the Royal Family, maintain a dignified silence. There is also another possibility. The genie is now out of the bottle. She is palpably a modern woman, influenced by feminism and sensitive to public opinion. Far from retiring into her shell, she is a woman on the move with her attitudes still evolving - a dangerous adversary of a Royal Family which simply refuses to change.

How should the Royal Family respond to this challenge from within? Certainly not by using the divorce as a means of removing her from the public scene. That simply will not work and will only



provoke her ire, as well as guaranteeing her victory in any public relations battle. Generosity is the only course of action that will save the Royal Family from digging itself into an even deeper hole. At the same time, though, it must go further. When Diana suggested that the monarchy needed to make itself more open and accessible, she was speaking on behalf of most people, not least the younger generations. The underlying problem the Royal Family faces is how to modernise itself. It has barely started. Perhaps the divorce will provide the starting point. Even here the omens are not encouraging. The idea that a mother writes to her son and daughter-in-law telling them to get divorced smacks of the Fifties, not the Nineties.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Who benefits from the assisted places scheme?

From Mr George Walden

Sir: The exchange between Polly Toynbee and David Woodhead of the Independent Schools Information Service on private schools takes us deep into our educational cul-de-sac. Mr Woodhead (Another View, 21 December) is right to castigate Labour for its opposition to selection - its grounds for withdrawing the assisted places scheme (APS) money. To date, that is all Labour policy on private schools consists of.

Yet I, too, am in favour of withdrawing the APS money, for more positive reasons. Britain, uniquely in Europe, has two educational cultures. The theory is that the APS narrows the gap, yet the more the independent sector is subsidised, the wider the gap and the greater the need to bridge it. So we have a circular, self-justifying (and in the Conservative case) self-gratifying process. Handing down scholarships makes us feel good. It makes Labour feel good to withdraw them.

This circularity is characteristic of the debate. The Government's attempts to improve state schools are a valiant but ultimately lost cause while pretty well the entire professional class has no stake in them. A partial answer would be to reserve the APS money for schools that move into the state sector, opening themselves to all by selective examination. A bolder move would be to extend the APS progressively until it engulfed, on a

voluntary basis, the entire independent sector. Yes, clever children would get superior education - but so do students who get to Oxford or Cambridge.

Expensive? So is our educational gulf. Drastic situations require drastic remedies. The notion that we can go on as we are, the only country in the Western world where the chief political parties send their children to different schools is fantasy. So is my solution, so long as those parties remain locked in antique class positions. My optimism springs from the fact that one day "life itself", in the shape of a tidal wave of global competition, will force us from our trenches.

Yours faithfully,
GEORGE WALDEN
MP for Buckingham (Con)
House of Commons
London, SW1
21 December

From Professor Joan Freeman
Sir: It is a particular feature of follow-up studies that they take some years to do. David Woodhead, national director of the Independent Schools Service, takes me (and Professor Peter Saunders of Sussex University) to task (Another View, 21 December) because the research on the effects of private and state schools began with a sample who were born 40 years ago - but the findings that showed little difference in adult outcome were this year's.

My concern about the £105m spent on Assisted Places was

based on independent research, not, as he says, "assertions". I refer to the dedicated study published in 1989, *The State and Private Education: an Evaluation of the assisted places scheme* by Tony Edwards, John Fitz and Geoff Whitty (Palmer Press). It states clearly that fewer than 10 per cent of the selected children had fathers who were manual workers, compared with 50 per cent in service-class occupations such as teaching, and that although children from single-parent families made up the largest category, other disadvantaged groups, notably the unemployed, and black and Asian families, had poor representation. They also found that two-thirds of those taking up places for the first time at 16 were already fee-paying pupils in the same school.

Of course, there is always the possibility that things have changed beyond recognition in the past few years, though that remains to be seen. But, most importantly, we do not know how those Assisted Places pupils would have fared had they not gone to private schools, but to good comprehensive schools instead. After all, they were chosen because they were extremely bright, well motivated and from supportive families. At best, the assisted places scheme remains unproven; at worst, it is a misdirection of educational funds.

Yours faithfully,
JOAN FREEMAN
London, W1
21 December

Hindley: punished and rehabilitated

From Mrs I. Pickard

Sir: I am the same age as Myra Hindley and was a recent mother at the time of the Moors Murder. I suspect that along with many women, I tormented myself with fears for my children's safety if such "monsters" as these people could exist. Again, like most people, I thought that any jail sen-

tence was a "soft option" for so heinous a crime.

My daughter, age 27 and unborn when the murders took place, is one of those vociferous in the belief that Myra Hindley should remain in prison for the rest of her life. It is a view I no longer share.

There can be no doubt that

Myra Hindley is being "treated differently" ("Hindley ready to fight 'death in jail' ruling", 20 December). Her crime, was grotesque and she readily admits full responsibility for this, but she has served many, many years more in jail other criminals who have had equally scant regard for the suffering of others.

Is part of her crime that she is a woman? The tabloids have always been at pains to emphasise this aspect. They play on the nurturer/mother ideal of womanhood and show her as the antithesis of this, whipping up a frenzy of hatred every time her name is mentioned in connection with release. The recent, refuted claims that she established a friendship with Rosemary West in Durham jail bear witness to this obsession with the "evil woman" syndrome. No doubt it sells newspapers, but these attacks have little to do with justice and are more to do with serving a distasteful public propensity for salacious tit-battle.

The fact remains that Hindley has served a very long term in prison. While this can never be long enough for the families of her victims, and we should not expect them to think otherwise, there can be no legal justification for her continued incarceration. Hindley has served twice the normal life sentence. If prison is supposed to be a mixture of punishment and rehabilitation, then she most certainly fits the category of those who are ready to re-enter society. She should now be released.

Yours faithfully,
I. PICKARD
Yorkshire
20 December

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Ashby's expensive libel action

From Mr Walter Cairns

Sir: The tragic case of David Ashby's lost libel action (report, 20 December) highlights the need for alternative solutions to disputes concerning allegations made about people.

There is nothing that a libel action can do which could not be achieved by a statutory right of reply. Even if Mr. Ashby had won, the "no smoke without fire" syndrome would have ensured that, with certain people, he would always remain "guilty". A statutory right of reply, on the other hand, allows the injured party to state his/her case in full and in a prominent position in the newspaper concerned, is less expensive and less emotionally draining for all those concerned.

Also, in any confrontation between the might of a national newspaper and an individual, the

latter - however prominent in public life - is invariably cast as an "underdog" and therefore is more inclined to receive the readers' sympathy.

Yours sincerely,
WALTER CAIRNS
Manchester
20 December

From Ms Lucy Haile
Sir: Surely, it is the press and its voracious patriots, who have ruined David Ashby, not his lack of openness ("Ruined by a lie, not by a lifestyle", 21 December). The charge of hypocrisy levelled against Mr. Ashby seems presumptuous: it may be that he supports family values all the more for his own bitter experience of a broken home.

Yours faithfully,
LUCY HAILE
Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire
20 December

Rudolph the toasted reindeer

From Mr David Ould

Sir: Mr Kimber writes (Letters 20 December) that Santa is as credible or incredible as the story of the Flood or that of Jonah and the whale. Perhaps he is unaware that there is a large amount of geological evidence for a major catastrophic flooding of the Tynes and Euphrates around the time that the Bible would date the Flood or that there are many stories of smaller animals surviving inside large whales.

Santa, on the other hand, is a little harder to get your head round. I have it on good authority that if each child receives no more than a medium-sized Lego kit then Santa's sleigh will have to carry 321,300 tonnes. Apparently this would require 214,200 reindeer. Assuming that he uses different time zones to his advantage then he has 31 hours in which to carry out his momentous task. As he doesn't seem to handle Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Buddhists that leaves 378 million children spread, according to the Population Reference Bureau, at a rate of 3.5 per household. That means he makes 91.8 million visits, in other words 822.6 per second. If we are generous and assume that the houses are equally spread (about .78 miles per household) then that makes a total trip of 75.5 million miles at 650 miles per second, not counting toilet breaks.

Those physicists I know assure me that 320,000 tonnes travelling at 650 million miles per second

creates an enormous amount of air resistance (14.3-quadrillion joules per reindeer to be precise). Rudolph would get toasted and I'd hate to be anywhere near the sonic boom.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID OULD
London, NW1
20 December

From Mrs Deborah Jackson
Sir: St Nicholas was an early 4th-century bishop, probably from Lycia, not Spain (Letters, 19 December). He saved the lives of three boys after they had been cut up and pickled in a salting-tub to serve for bacon, and was thus made patron saint of, among other things, small boys.

The idea that only the well-behaved get presents goes back to an old German custom where an adult dressed up as St Nick and distributed small gifts to "good" children.

Santa underwent the full transformation from child rescuer and occasional gift-giver to behavioural watchdog with the 1934 pop classic "Santa Claus is Coming To Town".

He sees you when you're sleeping
He knows when you're awake
He knows if you've been bad or good
So be good for goodness' sake

He may be known as Father Christmas, but his proliferation on every high street, rattling tins or staked out in grotto-land, tends to prove the contention that he is slowly turning into Big Brother.

Yours sincerely,
DEBORAH JACKSON
Bath
20 December

1995: thanks for the trouble spots

"We come now to the main award of 1995, the award given to the place in the world named the Trouble Spot of the Year."

These were the words which galvanised those who were still awake at the 1995 Independent Awards of the Year ceremony, which took place this week in the Canary Wharf Executive Disco Suite.

"As you know," said Lord Shareholder, head of the Independent empire, "every year we give recognition to one place which, more than anywhere else, has attracted bad news, had publicity and paneloads of journalists."

"Sometimes I am asked why we bother to give recognition to a place of ill repute. I always make the same answer: we recognise these places of low repute because they draw the flak away from the places where the rest of us live."

The value of a place like Brixton is that it makes us glad we are living in Pinner. We read terrible things about Bosnia, and part of us is glad that we have nothing so bad in Britain to worry about.

That is why, in the past, we have honoured such places as Beirut, East Timor, Bhopal, Toxteth and



MILES KINGSTON

Haiti. These are places which, in their own ways, might be very attractive places to be in at the best of times. Indeed, my lady wife and I have in the past spent enjoyable holidays in Beirut and Haiti, at the invitation of the government of the day, and we have once or twice driven speedily through Brixton and emerged none the worse. No *Bonfire of the Vanities* scenario there!

An uneasy ripple ran through the star-packed crowd, at the realisation not only that Lord Shareholder had referred to a hardback book but, at this rate, was going to go on all night. There were several calls of "Get on with it, you old windbag!"

"And so I shall," smiled Lord Shareholder. "Now, 1995 has been a good year for trouble spots. Bosnia has dominated the headlines. Rwanda, though far away, has done

its bit. The West Bank has performed nobly. Northern Ireland has done remarkably well in a year in which we all thought it would fade from the map of international strife, chiefly because of the so-called 'peace process', a strange new ritual invented by John Major and Gerry Adams, in which neither side gets together to talk about anything, and all sides refuse to give up their weapons."

"Is it one of these old favourites which has won? Or is it a younger contender such as Algeria? Algeria has not hit the headlines in this country, chiefly because we seldom report the doings of the ex-colonies of another country."

"Strange, it is not, that we faithfully report what happens in India and not in old Indo-China? That we print the news from Nigeria and not from Niger? That just because a place used to belong to the French we take no interest in it?"

"When my good lady wife and I are looking for a relaxing holiday in the sun, or a weekend away from it all, we often jet down to the little French island of Réunion, confident in the knowledge that we shall get good coffee, good croissants and no British tourists..."

"But let us get straight to the winners. The top three trouble spots in the world are, in reverse order, as follows. Number three..."

Here Lord Shareholder paused briefly as he attempted to open a large envelope.

"Number three trouble spot in the world is - 'Wherever Rupert Murdoch doings to be!'"

Happy laughter greeted this. "Number two trouble spot is - Nigeria!"

"And the number one spot, a place which this year has come to symbolise strife, unhappiness, bitterness, disinformation, and open warfare is - Buckingham Palace!"

Rapturous applause.

"Right to the end of the year the Palace has provided endless strife. Who would have thought that this week we should find the Queen writing to her own child recommending him to get divorced, which is directly contrary to the teachings of the Church of which she is head. I could go on all night..."

"No, no - spare us!" came many cries.

"Quite right too," rejoined the genial Lord Shareholder. "Enough of this tomfoolery. Let's get down to some serious drinking!"

comment

Depressive Diana and the Prince of Wimps



Virginia Ironside can see only more misery ahead for all concerned

If any one of the 160,000 people who will probably get divorced next year wants a textbook example of how not to handle their break-up, they need look no further than the Royal Family.

It has been one long saga of unpleasantness. No doubt the Queen feels, like a vet faced with an animal in agony, that it would be kindest to put this marriage out of its misery.

But if they divorce, what will happen to Diana? She must have known divorce was in the air when she was interviewed on *Panorama*, making a last attempt to get public sympathy on her side. For the more she has the public in the palm of her hand, the more she can demand in a divorce. She has dreamed up a role for herself as a non-royal personage — the Queen of Hearts. But the truth is that, divorced from Charles, she won't be of as much interest to the public. If she's living with a hanker boyfriend in a country house in Bucks, who will listen, riveted, to her every word on television? Who will long, in the watches of the night on the cancer ward, for a visit from the fairy princess herself?

Once divorced, she will almost certainly experience double depression. For she will be losing a title and an identity as well as a marriage. Nearly everyone feels depressed on getting divorced. They may feel delighted to be free of their partners, but they still feel miserably unhappy that all the hopes they had have officially died. In the same way as being married — a public act endorsed by law — is nothing like living together, so divorce is nothing like separation. The day the decree nisi comes is often a day of grieving even for couples who still loathe each other.

As a self-confessed depressive with self-esteem about as tall as a blade of recently mown grass, Diana will almost certainly slump into despair again. Like many people with a wobbly sense of themselves, she thrives on drama, and it won't be so easy to be dramatic when she's Mrs Nobody.

The divorce will be a relief to Charles. His pleasure can only be dimmed, however, by the fact that the idea has been initiated, as always, by his mother, rather than himself — another humiliation that will

serve to fuel his image as prince of wimps.

And the children? Perhaps they will be relieved at the idea of a divorce, which will at least end the constant sniping between their parents, and, in particular, the sexual revelations, which embarrass all children (no child ever wants to imagine their parents having sex with anyone, even each other).

But more likely they will be extremely unhappy, for however much their parents gripe about each other, nearly every child harbours a fantasy that one day warring parents might finally be united to give them a secure and loving family. The spectre of stepmothers and stepfathers will start to haunt their dreams and their mother's male friends will cease to be jolly uncles and more like threats.

It won't be so easy for Diana to be dramatic when she's Mrs Nobody

These anxieties can only be compounded by the fact that the Queen confirmed that she had breached the subject to their parents just before Christmas — another sign of how incredibly insensitive the Royal Family is towards children. The Queen delivered the news only five days before a day when Harry and William should be peacefully opening their stockings and singing carols, untroubled by their parents' tempestuous relationship.

And how will their divorce affect us, the people? The Charles and Di affair has been as revolting and compulsive as the Roman Circus. Our better selves will be glad that the spectacle of two dangerous and damaged people tearing each other to shreds is coming to an end; our worse selves will be baying for more blood, more revelation, but only partly because we thrill to the sight of blood. There has been, and still is, something quite instructive about their appalling behaviour. And one of the reasons we find it fascinating is because there is a ghastly morality tale from which we should all do well to learn.

When the monarchy went into showbiz

By her crude publicity stunts, Diana may force us to think about constitutional reform, says Anthony Sampson

The Queen's advice to the Prince and Princess of Wales, to divorce as soon as possible, at least decisively cuts through the dangerous muddle that came to a head with the performance on *Panorama*.

Diana could not continue to confuse the roles of princess and film star, to have it both ways — to talk about her husband and her unwillingness to divorce while using television to explain her grievances against the prince as if she were on an American television chat show; to want to be an ambassador for Britain while undermining the British constitutional system; to devise a theatrical role as the "Queen of Hearts" while actually being married to the heir to the throne.

Diana's television show, however enjoyable and brilliantly rehearsed, marked a terminal confusion between entertainment and serious constitutional argument which the BBC should never have so solemnly endorsed for it encouraged a Hollywood approach to the monarchy which was more damaging than the most scurrilous tabloid newspaper scandals. However much the British may make fun of the monarchy and relish the soap opera, it remains at the heart of the British system, not just in con-

stitutional but psychological terms, as the basis of the national sense of continuity and security.

The British have been encouraged by the tabloid newspapers — and by Diana — to enjoy the monarchy in adolescent terms, as something to be constantly attacked and mocked, without having to think about a likely alternative: rather like teenage children hurting insults at their parents without ever contemplating leaving home.

The tabloid newspapers, abetted by the prince's party, have made the monarchy increasingly unworkable by perpetual intrusion and melodrama. Yet the British people have still not cared or dared to look at the problems of establishing a republic. Despite all the anti-monarchic frenzy, there is no serious republican party or even movement.

The result is an uncertainty which goes much deeper than appears. For behind this soap opera the Queen remains head of state and Prince Charles is her likely successor, on whom the continuity of the state depends; heads of state, much more than we realise, play not just a key constitutional role, but also an anthropological role as the guardians of

national identity and reassurance. The fact that national administrations have become far more complex and impersonal in recent centuries has not diminished the psychological need for figureheads. The national insecurity which results from overthrowing them is still very dangerous. In psychological terms the subverters of this continuity, from Rupert

brought down by the Algerian crisis. As Parisians wondered whether the paratroops would descend from the sky to carry out a coup d'état, their insecurity was almost palpable; they felt the whole identity of France hung in the balance — until Charles de Gaulle reappeared to provide the leadership for the Fifth Republic.

In 1974 I was in Washington

when Congress was nervously preparing to impeach President Richard Nixon, who was manipulating all the splendour of his office to defend his crookery. Americans were terrified that their constitution would not work until the tapes miraculously forced Nixon to resign; and the appearance of President Gerald Ford at the White House brought back the sense of continuity.

The British could watch the constitutional crises of the Americans and the continentals with some complacency and Schadenfreude, taking for granted that their own suc-

cession was assured, as rival prime ministers moved quietly in and out of No 10 while the Queen provided the continuous ceremonial figurehead.

We have too easily taken the continuity for granted, assuming that the monarchy can survive any amount of commercial exploitation as a means of entertainment without any protection, stripping all its dignity away, scandal by scandal. The princess's *Panorama* was the last stage in the striptease — and clearly it was the last straw for the Queen.

Now, when the divorce goes through, it should be possible to separate the crucial constitutional issues from the showbiz and to have a serious argument about what system the British really want. If we want a republic, let us discuss how we would elect a president and whether we want a former politician (such as Baroness Thatcher) to represent us.

If, as I suspect, we would take fright at that alternative, let us grow up and realise that we do not want to leave home. Let us stop undermining what we have, face up to the shortcomings of any family on the throne, insist on a more realistic and relevant court, and then provide sufficient privacy to the monarch to make the job

'We may be grateful to Diana for bringing the royal soap opera to a farcical climax'

Murdoch to the *Economist*, are the modern equivalents of regicides — with no Oliver Cromwell in mind as a replacement.

Republics are more aware of the importance of this continuity than monarchies, because they have had to think harder about it. Many of their people have experienced how completely they can become unmoored without their head of state. I have watched it happening in France and in the United States. In 1958 I was in Paris when the Fourth Republic was tottering to its end, when the last prime minister had been

when Congress was nervously preparing to impeach President Richard Nixon, who was manipulating all the splendour of his office to defend his crookery. Americans were terrified that their constitution would not work until the tapes miraculously forced Nixon to resign; and the appearance of President Gerald Ford at the White House brought back the sense of continuity.

The British could watch the constitutional crises of the Americans and the continentals with some complacency and Schadenfreude, taking for granted that their own suc-

Time to switch off the royal soap opera



The Queen may want a new storyline, but the show is at risk, says Bryan Appleyard

The Princess of Wales's *Panorama* interview and the Queen's reaction in calling for a divorce makes at least one thing clear: this is not, indeed never has been, a constitutional issue. Through the long years of royal crises, various "constitutional experts" have been wheeled on and off the stage to speak sagely of the implications of too-sucking, mobile phone bugging or bulimia. A few royals have always behaved badly, we are told, yet the institution has survived. Bagehot and Burke are solemnly invoked and everybody feels better.

But the truth is now out and the "experts" can be shown the door. The constitution has nothing to do with it. How could it? We don't have one. Only one thing really counts these days: the approval or disapproval of the masses.

To those of us unblinded by expertise, this has been obvious from the beginning. The whole point about the catastrophic behaviour of the Queen's children has been that, in contemporary Britain, it could not be hidden. The walls of deference and discretion that used to surround the royals have been too thoroughly undermined by the media and by the disintegration of a trusted inner circle of aristocrats and courtiers. Family problems are now likely to be publicised because the press will always be eager to provide resentful royals or hangers-on with money and/or a handy opportunity for score-settling.

The graceless and Princess of Wales is the supreme expression of this new style of media-amplified family row. Diana, at arm's length, co-operates with Andrew Morton's hook; Charles co-operates with Jonathan Dimbleby's. Charles admits adultery on television; Diana does the same; and, the evidence of her wounds oozing out of her Kohl-rimmed eyes, gently but decisively takes the opportunity to knife the whole Windsor clan. Nobody throws platitudes any more — too messy. They just call their pals in the media.

Perhaps without knowing it, Charles and Diana are acknowledging that the constitution is indeed bunk. Precedent and tradition are useless as guides: this is the age of the soundbite, the hot, sweet hit of the media confession. Charles, unskillfully, is playing for the popular vote; Diana, very skillfully, is doing the

same. They have learnt the rules of the game, the game of emotionally coercing the masses.

The Queen successfully maintains her own position by not playing. She doesn't pour out her heart on television. As a result, she is seen as stilled against by her children rather than sinning. She may have brought them up in a rather strange and, with hindsight, ill-judged way. But who, when it comes to children, ever gets it right?

Strategically, however, I think she has got it wrong. From the underbelly of the Sixties onwards she has had the problem of finding a convincing role for the royals. The one she chose was that of exemplary family. She allowed documentary cameras into their home and we saw them as — sort of — ordinary people, the ideal extended family to which we could all aspire.

She was playing with fire. On the one hand, she dangled bait in front of the media sharks — the big story about the exemplary family could only ever be that it was not, in fact, exemplary. On the other hand, she was assuming her own regal sense of discipline would be transmitted to the next generation. The media set about tearing down the chosen image. One by one the young royals, and assorted courtiers, co-operated.

The Queen's latest tactic is a risky attempt to intervene in the shark pool. Demanding a divorce is an attempt to outflank Diana. The *Panorama* interview was a shocker, a malign combination of populist psychobabble and simple revelation. Take away the big, sappy eyes and the drawn, gym-fit face and what we had here was a vengeful superstar, viciously ripping away at the manners and pretences of the House of Windsor.

The Princess chose to play very hard ball indeed and now the Queen has decided to call her bluff. The risk is that Diana will not be called; she will either fight the divorce or continue her programme of Windsor-bashing. Or both.

The threat to Diana is that she might be utterly margin-



link the claims become bizarre. On what basis would she then walk down the steps with President Menem? Why should this strange, baseball-capped figure appear, unannounced, by our hospital beds? She might slump into being just another famous-for-being-famous person, just another jetsetter and partygoer, a Queen not of Hearts but of Trash.

mate, should place bets on the stability of Edward, William, Harry or even Edward's fiancée-in-waiting, Sophie. But the primary embarrassment would be removed and the issue of the succession could be dealt with in relative peace.

But will there be a succession? This week's intervention by the Queen is a clear attempt to put a stop to the Royal Fam-

Precedent and tradition are useless as guides: this is the age of the hot, sweet hit of the media confession

If, as an alternative to that fate, she remarries, her claim would be completely void, she would have formed an entirely non-royal household and relinquished even the appeal of a sad, wronged, lonely princess.

The advantage to the Queen of a divorce is that the war could be said to be over. At least one category of royal stories would end. Fergie and Andrew still threaten almost limitless possibilities of undignified antics; and no one, in the present cli-

ly as soap opera, to try for a period of calm in which, with luck, the monarchy could rebuild itself as a respected, maybe even loved national institution. But I seriously doubt that even a decade of peace could achieve such a rebuilding.

For the unsavoury, bitching implosion of the royals is just one aspect of a wider cultural change. Through the Eighties we saw a sustained, Thatcher-inspired attempt to revive British nationalism. The Falk-

lands war seemed to announce that the bulldog Brits could still stand alone against tyranny. But that revival was an aberration. Now its credibility has collapsed. The lineage and the history no longer give us our unique claim to be a chosen people. The celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War may have helped to remind us of the last time we stood alone, inspiring, historically brave; but they also signalled the end of that history. The old men are dying, the Lancasters and Spitfires are curiosities for the young. We shall never be called upon to stand alone again — and, if we were, we couldn't.

Now we all know that the lion had roared its last, that the revived nationalism of the Eighties would not last out the Nineties other than at a few gloomy Euro-sceptic lunches at the Travellers or the Reform. And, perhaps, now we all know that royalty is a luxury, an extravagance that we can only afford if its members can be relied upon to play the game.

For British royalty needs at least a degree of nationalism.

However much the Queen might play the family card or Charles might moan about architecture, their legitimacy still rests on the remains of imperial authority. When the tabloids weren't ripping apart their family life, they were still glorifying, damp-eyed, in the jewels and the ceremony, the whole "heritage" appeal of the monarchy. We wanted both the imperial mystique and the grubby scandal — indeed the two were locked in a vicious co-dependent relationship. If, after all, there was no mystique, how could there be any scandal?

But now, with the popular mystique of nationalism gone from the culture as a whole, what hope is there even for a soap-opera monarchy? Without the cheering crowds the Windsors are just another dysfunctional family waving at the indifferent traffic in the Mall.

A divorce will settle nothing, even if, against all the odds, the people learn to love Camilla Parker-Bowles. Too much has changed since that "fairy-tale wedding". Apart from anything else, we stopped believing that fairy-tales were British-made.

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U-turn brings rail freight back together



Brave face: Sir George Young, Transport Secretary

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

The Government has reversed its policy on the privatisation of BR's freight companies by reuniting the three recently separated companies in order to maximise the proceeds from the sale.

Two hidders, which are both seeking to buy all three as a group, have been shortlisted by the Department of Transport, which means that the policy introduced last year of splitting up the profitable part of BR's freight operations to maximise on-rail competition has been abandoned.

The two remaining bidders are First Freight, a consortium of Loadhaul, one of the BR companies, and Omnitrix, a Denver-based rail haulier, and Wisconsin Central, the fast-growing rail freight company that recently bought Res, the operator of the mail trains and the Royal Train and which is also the main owner of New Zealand's rail freight company. The two have beaten off competition from the two other BR freight companies, Mainline, which had the French SNCF as one of its partners, and Transrail, which had introduced an innovative new service linking London with Scotland, but apart from Wisconsin there was very little outside interest in the companies.

Industry observers suggest that the three combined should obtain around £100m for the Government's coffers, considerably more than if they had been sold separately because of the extra competition they would have faced. Julia Clarke of the Railfreight Users' Group said: "The Treasury has always favoured selling the three as a combined whole because they are clearly worth more as one business."

The Government yesterday

tried to put a brave face on its U-turn last night. Sir George Young, the Transport Secretary, said: "It was clear from the bids that the market's strong preference is for a combined sale of the three companies."

Mr George confirmed the view of many transport analysts who felt that rail, which now only has a 6 per cent share of the overall freight market, faced such extreme competition from road haulage that there was no need for on-rail competition. He said: "Bidders judge that a unified trainload freight business will be in the best position to increase rail's share of the freight

market by offering customers an attractive alternative to road freight."

However, Brian Wilson, Labour's transport spokesman, said: "It cost millions of pounds in lawyers' fees and other costs to create three separate companies and now that has been wasted."

"This is another example of how privatisation is being done on the hoof, with the sole aim of selling assets as quickly as possible."

There was also concern from freight users last night about the reunification of the three companies. Julia Clarke said:

"There were signs that the competition between the three freight companies were bringing benefits for users by reducing freight rates. Now that advantage will be lost."

There was also worry that if Wisconsin is allowed to gain control of the rail freight network it will be in a powerful monopoly position.

Keith McNair, director of fuel management at National Power, Britain's largest rail freight user, which has just set up its own rail freight operation, said he had no concerns about the re-formation of one company.

However, he said: "Wisconsin would be in a very strong position if it won control of the BR companies as it already has Res. We would prefer if there were two main competitors on rail."

Under the Government's new regime for freight, the sale of the rail freight companies is likely to be completed early in the new year.

The announcement of the shortlist for rail freight shows that rail privatisation is gathering pace, following this week's announcement of the first three rail passenger franchises and the sale of Res earlier this month.

Watchdog powers: Regulator says new proposals will enable UK 'to keep ahead of liberalisation in the rest of the world'

OfTel plan sparks bitter BT clash

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

BT yesterday clashed openly with Don Cruickshank, director general of the industry watchdog OfTel, over his pursuit of "sweeping" new anti-competitive powers. The company, which faces a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission if it fails to reach some agreement on the issue, said that the extension of OfTel's powers in this area, as detailed in a document published yesterday "should be a matter for Parliament".

Alan Rudge, BT's deputy group managing director, said: "The new powers which the director general proposes to take for himself would give him virtually unchallengeable power to decide that anything done in the British telecommunications industry was anti-competitive. He would have almost absolute power, with no right of appeal to the courts or other interested body for impartial analysis if he gets the facts wrong or his decision is mistaken."

BT added: "The director general seems to have it in mind to go into a whole range

of activities that would not normally be considered anti-competitive, such as innovation and the introduction of new services."

The company also attacked the proposals as "asymmetric" singling out BT for regulation with no guarantee that its rivals would be treated in the same way.

Mr Cruickshank's plan, which he says is in fact "deregulatory" is to put into BT's licence a general anti-competitive provision, replacing some of the dozens of individual conditions which at present govern BT's behaviour and which, according to OfTel, make investigation and action extremely difficult and time-consuming. He said that any future relaxation on BT's price controls or reduction in other regulations would not be possible until such a safeguard is in place.

Although Mr Cruickshank is consulting on the detail, he made clear his determination to go ahead.

"There are no options here. This is a statement of a single proposal and how it would be applied. It seems to me that where the market is and where it is going - unless we do some-

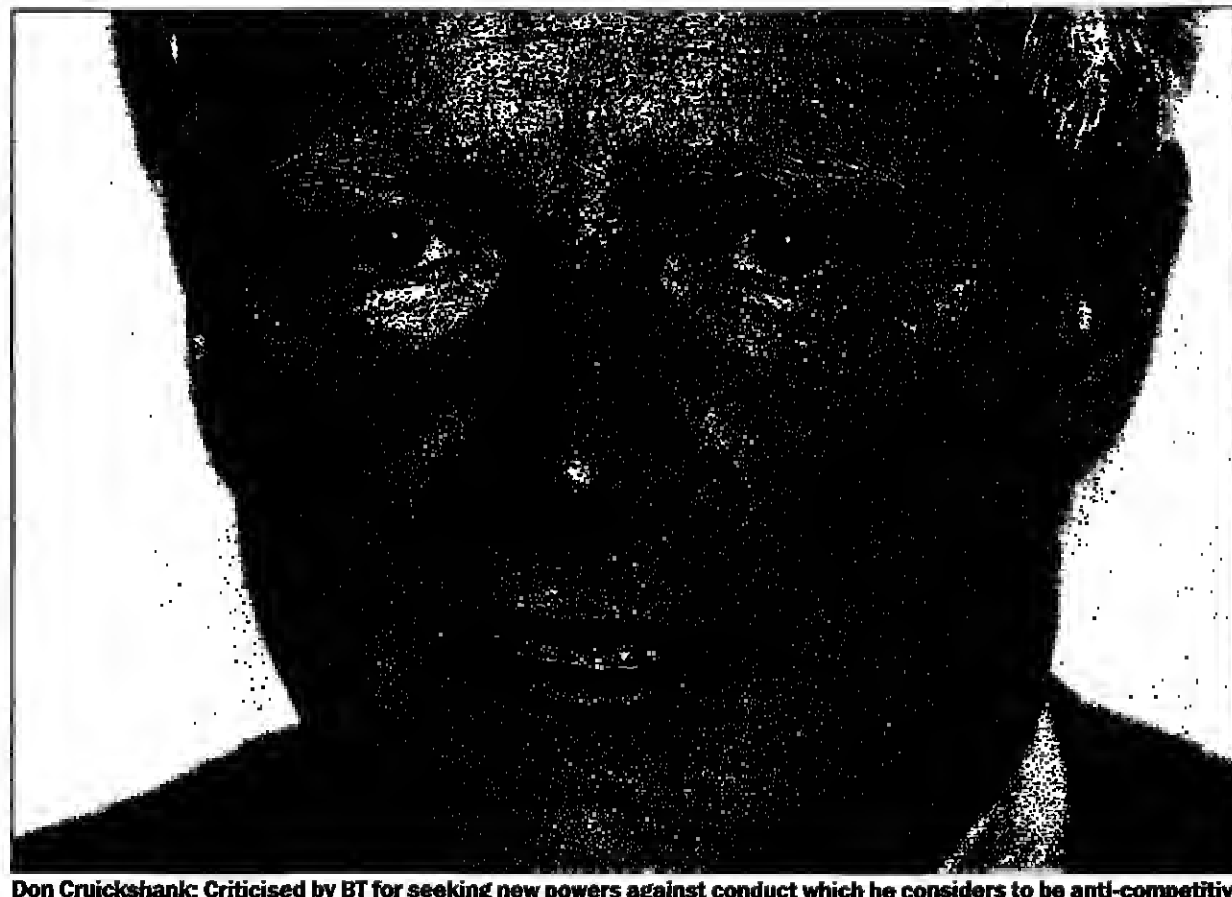
thing like this we run the distinct danger of holding back competition," he said.

Mr Cruickshank argued that he is doing no more than making use of the powers accorded by Parliament. He added: "This is probably the most important step we can take in the UK to keep ahead of liberalisation in the rest of the world."

The latest statement by the regulator is the culmination of a year in which relations between OfTel and the company appear increasingly strained.

The pre-Christmas missive comes only days after BT was ordered by the MMC to pay the lion's share of the £22bn of costs when customers switched to its competitors but which to keep their existing telephone numbers. Mr Cruickshank said that the arguments over "number portability" were one example of how the existing arrangements frustrate his ability to regulate.

He said that another area of concern was BT's ability to delay the introduction of new services by rivals which need to use its wires. He said that the "accumulation of certain actions by BT" could result in problems for competitors which are



Don Cruickshank: Criticised by BT for seeking new powers against conduct which he considers to be anti-competitive

"extremely difficult to get at under BT's licence."

John Butler, director for regulatory affairs, said that the proposals put forward yesterday result in unacceptable uncertainty for BT. "We have no way

of knowing how the director general - or any future director general - would implement them. It is an enormously wide power - a very wide discretion with no separate court and no right of appeal to go to anybody

else for an objective and dispassionate view of the case."

Mr Butler declined to comment on whether the matter would end up with the MMC. The cable television industry was swift to welcome the pro-

posals as an important boost for competition. A spokesman said that the situation as it now stood lacked the certainty of "effective and timely control" by OfTel.

Comment, page 17

No final payout from MDIS

DAVID HELLIER

McDonnell Information Systems Group, the beleaguered computer services company, produced further misery for its shareholders yesterday when it said it will not be paying a final dividend for the year.

It also said that its year-end figures will include exceptional provisions of around £20m as a result of the closure of some non-core operations, the cost of about 170 redundancies and other write-offs.

"This has been just one unmitigated disaster from start to finish," said one institutional shareholder who participated in the flotation of the company last March.

The shares have fallen from 260p to just 36.5p - down 24.5p yesterday - after a series of profit warnings and other bad news. The exceptional provisions will include a large write-down for the disposal of surplus property that is currently being sold.

The company said that profits for the year to 31 December 1995, will depend on the successful outcome of its new strategy, which is to concentrate on its core operations in the UK and the US.

The board, with Ian Hay Davison as chairman, is confident that revenues in the core UK and US operations will continue to grow and that the refocusing strategy will lead to a reduced cost base.

A company spokesman said yesterday that John Klein, the new chief executive, was clear about the strategy and prepared to take decisive action.

The company said that the combination of profits in the core UK markets and significant losses in the US operations meant that these businesses would broadly break even in 1995, before exceptional items were taken into account.

Comment, page 17

French groups plan to split Mid Kent assets

The takeover frenzy among the utilities took a novel twist with Saur and General des Eaux of France proposing to split the assets of Mid Kent Holdings, the water company in which they already jointly hold 39 per cent, writes Mary Fagan.

The French groups said that in the absence of a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission - inevitable under the rules governing the industry - they would have announced yesterday a bid at about 440p a share, valuing Mid Kent at £75m. Shares in the company surged 70p to 430p.

Under the proposed offer, General des Eaux would merge part of Mid Kent with its neighbouring subsidiary, Folkestone and Dover Water Services. Saur would merge its part with South East Water and some remaining assets would be jointly held. The French groups said that the joint initiative was not intended to set a precedent but was well-suited to the situation in the region. Mid Kent, however, said the announcement was unsolicited and unwelcome and could result in a prolonged period of uncertainty.

According to the partners, the move would result in benefits

which "are such that the interests of the customers in the area in which the three companies operate, and the regulator's ability to compare effectively the performance of water suppliers in the southern region, will be enhanced". Assuming a favourable outcome to the MMC inquiry, they would seek the approval of the Mid Kent board.

Ofwat, the water industry regulator, said the planned takeover bid might fall within the jurisdiction of the European Commission. The watchdog also warned that it would be concerned about the loss of any comparator in the industry which could "impair the ability of Ian Byatt, Ofwat's director general, to carry out his duties".

In the past, Ofwat has demanded stiff price reductions to offset any damage to competition. It also suggested recently that it may be appropriate for predators to seek a stock market listing for their UK water interests.

Ofwat said the most similar and recent proposed merger was between East Surrey Water and Sutton District Water where they agreed a 3.5 per cent price reduction over and above that already in place.

Granada has 'firepower' to raise bid

MATHEW HORSMAN
and **JOHN SHEPHERD**

Granada has got "plenty of firepower" in the event that it needs to raise its £3.3bn cash-and-shares bid for Forte.

The assertion, made by a Granada insider, came as the company's bankers confirmed that a £2.5bn syndicated loan to help finance the acquisition had been over-subscribed.

All told, 16 banks accepted

sub-underwriting terms covering £200m from the three lead bankers, ABN-Amro, BZW Syndications and Chemical Bank, proving, they said, that "the banking community has indicated a heavy measure of support for Granada and its offer for Forte."

Any raised offer for Forte would probably require additional cash. The Granada source said yesterday that it was not the time to discuss making a high-

er bid. But Granada's fiscal conservatism, its strongly cash-generative businesses and its 13 per cent stake in the cable and satellite broadcaster BSkyB combined to give it "plenty of scope if a higher bid proves necessary".

Meanwhile, Granada got an additional boost from the City in the form of a reasonably positive report from Merrill Lynch, the merchant bank. It stressed that Granada had the manage-

ment ability to tackle Forte's range of restaurants and budget hotels, even if there were questions about its understanding of the four-star and five-star businesses.

Merrill Lynch, which called on both sides to provide more detailed information about their plans, was harder on Forte, suggesting that Sir Rocco Forte, its chairman and chief executive, should split the two roles. In addition, it said the current man-

agement "was slow to take action on the ground" and that it had chosen the wrong defence strategy when it announced broad merger plans earlier this month.

Separately, the Takeover Panel ruled for a second time yesterday that Granada's controversial plans to enhance Forte profits by £100m a year if its bid is successful were "fairly presented" to analysts and the public.

Flextech confirms SelecTV talks

MATHEW HORSMAN
and **DAVID HELLIER**

Flextech, the cable and satellite programmer, yesterday confirmed it had held talks with SelecTV, the independent television company currently for sale, and that "if and its advisers continue to monitor the position closely".

Confirmation of its interest, first revealed in the *Independent* on Tuesday, may have been one factor in the delay to a heavily-trailed bid for SelecTV from Pearson, the media giant that is preparing a £45m offer.

It emerged last night that Pearson's bid will almost certainly be put off until the new year. It was speculated yester-

day that Flextech could make a formal offer in early January, and then request access to SelecTV's accounts and adequate time to perform due diligence.

A source close to SelecTV, however, said yesterday: "So far they have not offered us anything we are interested in."

Flextech is believed to be discussing an all-share deal, under which it would swap its stock in Scottish Television in return for a controlling stake in SelecTV.

Pearson's advisers have been reviewing the accounts since early last month. An informal deadline of the middle of this week proved impossible to meet, and the two sides will resume discussions after the Christmas break.

Pearson is offering cash, but its bid is contingent on the sale of SelecTV's loss-making cable channel and its 15 per cent stake in MAI, the ITV licence holder for the south of England. The rumour, consisting of SelecTV's programming library and its production companies, would then cost Pearson a net £10m.

SelecTV has a successful track record producing independent television programmes for the UK market. In addition to its trademark *Birds of a Feather*, it has been responsible for such series as *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* and *Shine On Harvey Moon*.

It has also made series starring Tracey Ullman, the actress-wife of Allan McGowan, SelecTV's chief executive.

The company last night supplied details of the relationship between Ms Ullman's own company, Mabelino, and SelecTV. For the current series, *Tracey Takes On*, SelecTV has put up an advance to secure worldwide distribution rights for 10 years. Mabelino, with a licence fee from BBC, the US broadcaster, will make the series.

That marks a change from previous arrangements between Ms Ullman and SelecTV, when the UK company was responsible for the production.

The change brings the relationship between the series star and the production company into line with American practice, where such distribution and production deals are more common.

Flotation would value Goldman Sachs at \$10bn

DAVID USBORNE
New York

Goldman Sachs will be valued at \$10bn (£6.5bn) if it decides to abandon its status as Wall Street's most celebrated private partnership and go public. This value would represent a premium of at least twice its estimated book value.

There is now a broad expectation among analysts in New York that the 127-year-old firm will opt to sell shares to the public for the first time next year.

The speculation has been fuelled by a sharp recovery in profits this year and comments yesterday from its chairman, Jon Corzine, implying that a sale was at least under consideration.

"Based on what I've seen in the last couple of weeks, I think it is likely to happen next year," remarked Ferrin Long, a veteran Wall Street observer at Brown Brothers Harriman. "It would be the end of an era."

Goldman Sachs, whose partners would stand to receive huge financial benefits from a flotation, has considered going public no fewer than five times in 25 years. In 1986, the firm's management committee voted in favour of a sale, but it fell foul of disagreements between its then partners.

Mr Long was among analysts suggesting that a premium of

twice net worth or even more is a realistic aim for the company, given the recent strong demand for brokerage house stocks on Wall Street. "What people will be buying is the name and the prestige."

Earlier this week, it emerged that the partnership earned \$1.37bn before taxes for its latest fiscal year, a dramatic improvement on 1994 when it registered earnings of \$508m. Bonuses of up to \$1m have also been distributed this month.

Partners will also have been encouraged by the successful recent flotation of Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette, another Wall Street brokerage, that was able to sell 20 per cent of its shares at 1.5 times book value.

Talking to the *Financial Times*, Mr Corzine confirmed that a flotation was indeed under consideration. "I would like the partners to have a chance to think about this and be fully informed," he said.

Some analysts believe that partners in the firm are still divided into two camps on the issue. Those in favour of a flotation will be eyeing the benefits of their holdings in the firm being made instantly more liquid. An opposing coalition of partners is reported to be arguing that the firm can best maintain its prestige and success by retaining its private standing.

STOCK MARKETS					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1995 High	1995 Low
FTSE 100	3633.30	+19.60	+0.5	3880.40	2954.20
FTSE 250	3967.30	+7.20	+0.2	3991.30	2967.30
FTSE 350	1803.50	+8.30	+0.5	1821.50	931.00
FT Small Cap	1928.30	+1.30	+0.1	1953.11	1678.61
FT All Share	1776.91	+7.71	+0.4	1837.78	1469.23
New York	5167.26	+7.94	+0.2	5207.44	3892.08
Tokyo	19693.25	+204.66	+1.1	19694.04	14485.41
Hong Kong	9907.61	+29.75	+0.3	10052.93	6987.93
Frankfurt	2265.07	+3.00	+0.1	2317.01	1910.96

INTEREST RATES						
Short sterling*		UK medium gilt		US long bond		
* 100-Basis interest contract		Thursday 10.10.90				
Money Market Rates		Bond Yields *				
	1 Month	1 Year	Medium Bond (%)	1 Year	Long Bond	10 Year Avg
UK	6.50	6.21	7.55	8.49	7.38	8.47
US	5.88	5.57	5.77	7.85	6.13	7.87
Japan	0.22	0.24	2.74	4.57	-	-
Germany	4.00	5.68	6.12	7.51	6.88	-
*Benchmark indices						
MAIN PRICE CHANGES						
Index	Price (¢)	Change (¢)	Change (%)	Falls	Price (¢)	Change (¢) % Change
Vaux Group	275	18	7.0	Mean (E D & F)	143	4 2.7
Roche-Royce	185	8.5	4.8	Nyxco Cablecom	114	3 2.6
Caradon	193	8	4.3	Bet	122	3 2.4

CURRENCIES

£/\$

Year	Rate
1980	1.67
1981	1.64
1982	1.61
1983	1.58
1984	1.52

£/DM

Year	Rate
1980	2.25
1981	2.22
1982	2.20
1983	2.18
1984	2.17

£/¥

Year	Rate
1980	161.00
1981	159.00
1982	157.00
1983	156.00
1984	155.00

Other West exchange rates and DM/DM exchange at 1980 base

Pound			Dollar				
	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago		Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
£ (London)	1.5381	+0.11c	1.545	£ (London)	0.6497	-0.05	0.647
\$ (M) Zurich	1.9389	+0.10c	1.9475	£ (M) Zurich	0.6500	-0.04	0.647
DM (London)	2.2182	-0.24c	2.4417	DM (London)	1.4402	-0.32c	1.5805
¥ (London)	159.745	-0.031	155.28	¥ (London)	161.845	-0.09	160.495
£ Index	82.8	-0.1	88.7	£ Index	83.8	-0.3	97.0

OTHER INDICATORS

	Yesterday	Day's Change	Year Ago	Index	Latest Tr. Price	Next Jan.
Oil Brent \$	17.85	+0.80	15.94	RPI	149.2+3.1pc	2.8 18 Jan
Gold \$	387.60	-0.2	381.8	GDP	106.5 2.1pc	4.3 22 Jan
Gold £	251.84	-0.31	246.527	Base Rates	— 6.50pc	5.25 —

هكذا من الأصل

A watchdog with absolute power cannot be right



COMMENT

With the bit between his teeth, Mr Cruickshank shows no sign of backing off. In these circumstances the argument will have to be decided by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

We have heard a lot from customers about what's wrong with the system for regulating privatised utilities. The complaint usually boils down to a relatively simple one - bills are too high, the service is lousy, profits are excessive and it is all the regulator's fault. For obvious reasons, the other side of the coin - what's wrong with the system from the corporate point of view - rarely gets much of a hearing. It is all very well going on about the sanctity of the privatisation contract, abuse of regulatory power and the like, but when the crux of the objection is to do with regulatory encroachment on the rewards of monopoly, as it usually is, there isn't going to be a lot of sympathy. BT's objection to "sweeping new powers" (BT's description) being demanded by Don Cruickshank, director-general of OfTel, seems to be a case in point.

What the regulator wants to do is replace the 76 specific clauses in BT's licence addressing anti-competitive behaviour with a catch-all measure that would allow him to act first and argue the toss later. The problem with the present set-up is that with every new case of monopolistic abuse, a specific licence amendment has to be designed to outlaw it. Until the change is made, which can often take some time, BT makes hay.

Furthermore, Mr Cruickshank argues, the proposed reform would only bring telecoms regulation into line with precedent for competition policy in much of the rest of Europe. On the face of it, all reasonable

enough stuff, and not in truth particularly onerous. BT is not, for instance, being asked willingly to give up market share, as has occurred in some other industries.

On the basis of the proposals put forward in yesterday's statement of intention, however, BT may have a point. If BT's reading of the document is correct, Mr Cruickshank may indeed be going a step too far. He is, BT believes, seeking absolute power for himself, unless he takes leave of his senses, he will pretty much be able to do what he likes. Without proper checks and safeguards - and there are few enough of those in place for regulators anyway - that cannot be right.

Nor can it be right to deprive BT of the fruits of innovation in the manner proposed. What Mr Cruickshank seems to be asking for is that BT make available to all competitors any proposed new service and product sufficiently far in advance of launch to allow them to respond with their own offerings. Even for a dominant player like BT, this would be a law so draconian as to stifle all incentive to product innovation and invention. The result might well be less choice and product differentiation, not more. The regulator would also be able to ban a new product as anti-competitive, regardless of the investment already made by BT.

With the bit between his teeth, Mr Cruickshank shows no sign of backing off. In these circumstances, the argument will have to be decided by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, for BT is in no mind to accept

the regulator's demands. There is nothing wrong with a general prohibition on anti-competitive behaviour, but the MMC will need to balance this with adequate channels of appeal and new safeguards to prevent abuse of regulatory power. The demand for advance warning of product innovation is ludicrous and needs to be dropped altogether.

Clarke's forecasts in consumers' hands

There was something for both the optimists and the pessimists in the national accounts for the third quarter - but on balance the pessimists had the stronger case. We already knew that the dismally low growth of 0.4 per cent would have melted away to virtually nothing without an increase in stockbuilding. Now we know that the economy would have fallen back if consumers had not dipped into their savings in a big way to finance expenditure.

If consumers are willing to run lower savings from now on, the outlook for 1996 could be as rosy as the Chancellor maintains. Helped by tax cuts, real personal disposable incomes are expected to rise by 2.75 per cent next year. This translates into a rise in consumer expenditure of 3.5 per cent because the Treasury assumes that the savings ratio will fall in 1996 to the level it has already reached in the third quarter of 1995.

However, in its forecast for the economy published earlier this week, the OECD predicted a much more sedate 2.3 per cent increase for consumer spending, largely because it is sceptical about a sustained fall in the savings ratio. Against a background of chronic job insecurity and high indebtedness, the OECD's view of what will happen to the savings ratio seems more plausible. All the more so, since the next few months are likely to see particular weakness in the economy as companies run down excess stocks. A sign that the long-awaited inventory adjustment was under way came in the fall in imports in November in trade with countries outside the European Union. Consumers may hail out the Chancellor's rosy forecast for the economy in 1996. But the balance of probabilities at this stage is that they won't.

A hard story to swallow at MDIS

If you like listening to tall stories, try this lone around the Christmas fireside: shares in McDonnell Information Systems (MDIS), the troubled computer software group, are now so low that they represent good value on recovery grounds. This contrarian view could be heard around the City yesterday, which if nothing else confirms that the party season has been a particularly heady one. After a series of three profit warnings and

yesterday's news of £20m of exceptional provisions and a passing of the dividend, shares in MDIS now trade at 36.5p, compared with 260p at the time of the flotation.

The first profits warning came within six months of the flotation and left shareholders casting suspicious glances at Barings Capital Investors, the venture capitalists, which made £48m out of selling its stake in the company when the company was listed. A second profits warning came in January this year, causing the shares to fall from 106p to 74p as the company announced delays in orders from the public sector for its software equipment. And a third setback occurred in September, leading to the resignation of Jerry Causley, who brought the company to market, as chief executive.

After such a run of news one might have expected the market to be immune to bad tidings. Not so. Yesterday's exceptional provisions, uncertain trading and the passing of this year's final dividend, knocked a further 24p off the shares. Neither of the advisers to the flotation, Barings and NatWest Securities, will be allowed to forget this in a hurry.

Jan Hay Davison, the chairman, who fell ill at the tail-end of last year with pancreatic cancer, now thinks he has the blocks in place to build the company up again. After such a performance, however, to believe the story is over requires a double measure of Christmas spirit. Anybody tempted to spend a little pin money on the shares must regard it as no better than a throw of the dice.

Bertelsmann expected in £1.3bn joint bid for CLT

MATHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

US-style media merger mania last night crossed the Atlantic with a vengeance, as speculation mounted that the German TV and publishing giant Bertelsmann and two French partners would bid more than £2bn (£1.3bn) for control of CLT, the Luxembourg-based broadcaster.

Although the bid was not imminent, they shied from outright denial of strong rumours in Germany. Analysts on the Continent and in London said the potential bid could mark the start of a wave of mergers and cross-shareholdings, as media companies prepare for the next stage in television's revolution - the transition to digital TV.

The possibility of a bid for CLT, which owns stakes in UK Talk Radio and in the consortium that won the Channel 5 licence battle, also fuelled speculation that Rupert Murdoch would soon enter the fray, perhaps in league with the German media magnate, Leo Kirch. There have already been rumours that Mr Murdoch would seek to take a 30 per cent

stake in CLT through his 40 per cent-owned BSkyB, the UK satellite and cable broadcaster.

Mr Murdoch's senior European executive, BSkyB's Sam Chisholm, travelled to Germany two weeks ago and was believed to have discussed media joint ventures with Mr Kirch.

One of Bertelsmann's likely partners in any CLT bid, the French media company Canal Plus, has invested heavily in digital satellite broadcasting, and is already Europe's largest pay-TV broadcaster, with 34 per cent of the market. BSkyB, second in the market, has about 30 per cent.

Bertelsmann's other partner is Havas, the French publishing group, which has shareholdings in both Canal Plus and CLT.

A near-60 per cent indirect stake in CLT is owned by Group Bruxelles Lambert, which is eager to trade out of what it views as a risky and expensive business. Havas has the remaining 40 per cent of CLT.

The European pay-TV market could grow by as much as 25 per cent a year by the end of the decade, according to a just-published study by Daiwa Se-

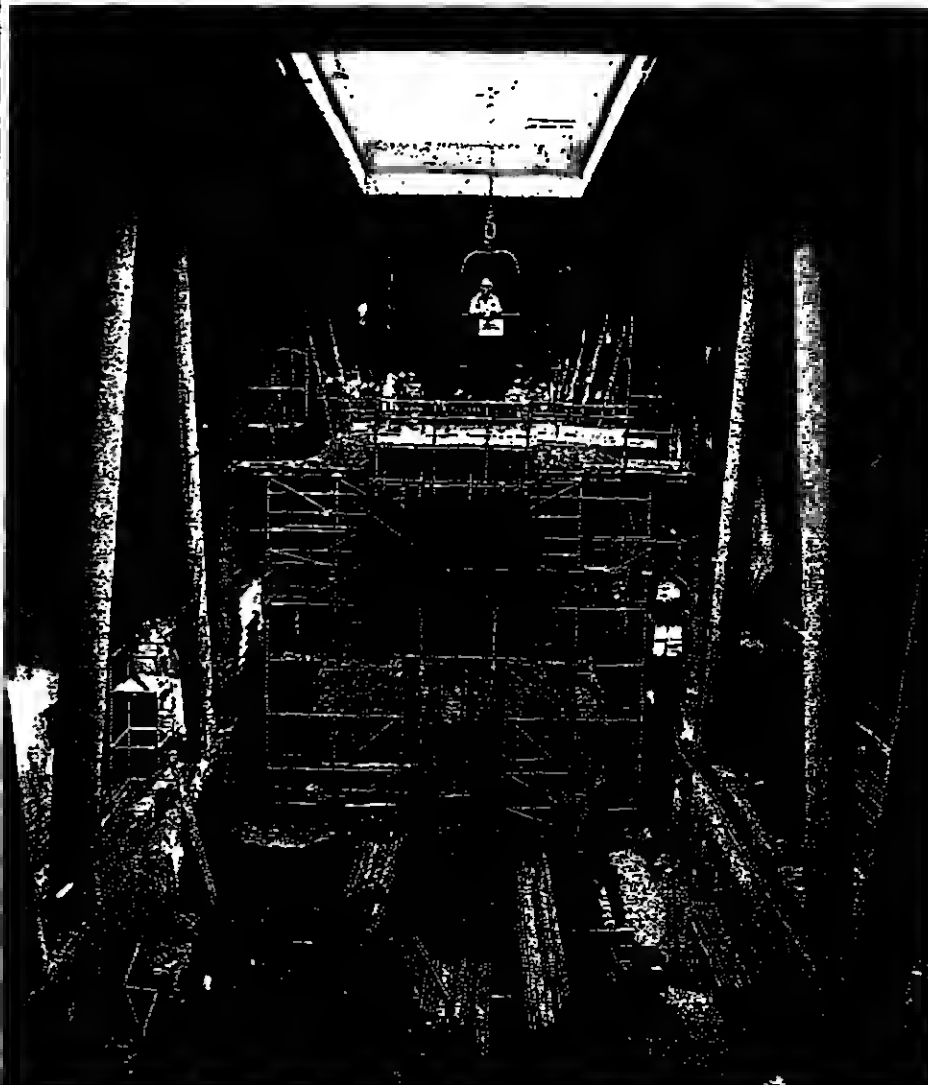
curities. The main driver is likely to be digital television, which will bring as many as 200 channels to European viewers.

Three large but so far loosely tied pay-TV groups have emerged in Europe. CLT already has close ties to Bertelsmann and Canal Plus through joint ventures in Germany and, like Canal Plus, has Havas as one of its main shareholders. All three broadcasters have agreed common standards for transmission and encryption, a factor believed to be key to the overall success of new digital services.

In the UK, BSkyB has gone its own way, at least to date. It could, however, develop closer ties to the third big force, the Kirch Group, which in turn has ties with Silvio Berlusconi in Italy and the Rimbent Group's Filmmet/Nethold operations. But digital television is likely to be very expensive to develop, and that is one factor fuelling the takeover speculation.

Mr Kirch, BSkyB and Canal Plus have already secured nearly all the slots available on the Astra digital satellites, to be launched in the next 18 months.

Topping day out for Tory minister in a deep hole



This hole, 405 metres long, 40 metres wide and 23 metres deep, was yesterday "topped out" by the Transport Minister, Steven Norris (in the bucket). It will eventually be North Greenwich station on the £2.1bn Jubilee Line, opening March 1998. Photograph: Edward Webb

IN BRIEF

High Court ruling on fictitious banks

The Bank of England has obtained a High Court ruling to stop Shaikh Ali Bin Mohamed El-Naiday, alias Ali Maly, from posing as the executive of a number of banks, all of which are fictitious. Working from an address in Haringey, London, Mr El-Naiday, an Egyptian passport holder, operates in the UK and abroad. The City police are investigating.

Quarterly rise for house prices

House prices in the three months to the end of September rose significantly compared to the previous quarter, according to fresh figures from the Land Registry. The figures, which are not seasonally adjusted, showed detached properties rose by 3.89 per cent, while semis rose by 2.39 per cent. Terraced prices went up 2.4 per cent, with the smallest rise recorded for flats and maisonettes at 0.7 per cent.

UK insurer takes over French underwriter

Independent Insurance, the recently listed UK insurer, yesterday announced it has taken over La Palatine Assurances, the French underwriting subsidiary of AMR, a large German insurance firm. Independent is being paid some £18m to take on La Palatine's liabilities. The UK company's share price rose 27p to £3.61 at the announcement.

Legal victory for Lloyd's names

Lloyd's names won an important legal victory against members' agents, who have now been judged liable for losses incurred by names negligently placed after 1989 on poor performing syndicates. The judgement in the Feltrim name's claim importantly relates to the new members' agents' regime begun in 1990, which supposedly removed them from responsibility for underwriting performance.

Biotech drug identified in Aids research

British Biotech shares gained 52p to £17.50 yesterday after one of its drugs was highlighted as a possible suppressant of the Aids virus. Robert Gallo, the controversial researcher into the disease, writing in the prestigious American scientific journal, *Science*, claimed that three proteins may control HIV in its early stages. Analysts were quick to identify British Biotech's BB-1010, as the only genetically engineered source of the MIP-alpha protein, which other research suggests could be the most important of the three highlighted by Mr Gallo.

Economy: Strong spending by consumers helps to offset fall in profits and larger current account deficit

Lower incomes trigger raid on savings

PAUL WALLACE
Economics Editor

Fresh signs of weakness in the economy emerged as real personal disposable income fell for the second successive quarter. Profits also declined and the financial surplus of industrial and commercial companies fell to its lowest for two years.

However, strong invisible earnings meant that the current account deficit was less than the City had been expecting.

The below-trend growth in the non-oil economy of 0.3 per cent in the third quarter was sustained by consumers dipping into their savings. Consumer spending rose by 0.6 per cent - slightly lower than the initial estimate - even though real personal disposable income fell by 0.2 per cent.

As a result, the savings ratio - expressed as a percentage of total personal disposable income - fell from 9.3 per cent in the second quarter to 8.6 per cent, the lowest for five years. City analysts disagreed over the interpretation of this plunge in savings.

"It would be most surprising to see the ratio stay this low, let alone fall any further, so spending will grow more slowly in 1996 than income," said Simon Briscoe, economist at Nikko Europe.

However, Ian Shepherdson, economist at HSBC Markets, interpreted the decline in the savings ratio "as a sign of a return of confidence". Along with the recent pick-up in mortgage demand, he said it suggested that consumers would sustain the recovery in 1996.

Spending was strongest on services, up by 0.8 per cent, as consumers splashed out on mobile phone calls and eating out. Expenditure on durables rose by 0.7 per cent, with a decline in



purchases of cars offset by strong growth in outlays on household durables such as furniture, computers and white goods. Spending on non-durable goods rose only 0.4 per cent. The need for strong consumer spending to sustain the economic recovery was under-

lined by a fall of 1.1 per cent in gross fixed capital formation. Although this was an improvement on the initial estimate of a 2.2 per cent decline, it left fixed investment just 1.6 per cent higher on the third quarter of 1994.

The outlook for higher in-

vestment took a knock as gross trading profits fell 1.5 per cent. While this was mainly in the North Sea sector, non-oil industrial and commercial companies also showed a small decline in profits, net of stock appreciation, of 0.2 per cent. This brought the annual rate

of profit growth down from 9 per cent in the second quarter to 5.6 per cent. By contrast, profits of non-oil industrial and commercial non-oil companies rose in 1994 by 14 per cent. Kevin Darlington, economist at Hoare Govett, said: "The combination of economic slow-

down, the now fading non-oil commodity price shock and margin pressure has wrought a marked slowdown in profits growth."

Despite cutting back on fixed investment, the financial surplus of industrial and commercial companies fell from £2.9bn in the second quarter to £2.5bn, its lowest for two years. However, according to Mr Shepherdson, "companies still have very strong balance sheets."

City economists gave a favourable reception to the latest figures on the balance of payments. "They show that the overseas account will not act as a constraint on policy nor as a thorn in the side of the authorities," Mr Briscoe said.

The deficit on the current account worsened marginally to £1.3bn. However, this was £600m better than the City had been expecting. In addition, there was a sharp downward revision to the second quarter from the initial estimate of £2.4bn to £1.2bn. The improvement occurred mainly because of upward revisions to income from services, up by £640m. Investment income increased by £460m.

Invisible earnings showed a surplus of £2.0bn in the third quarter, much the same as in the previous three months. The surplus on investment income rose by £100m to £2.1bn, while the surplus on trade in services fell from £1.7bn to £1.6bn.

Overseas direct investment into the UK was £4.3bn in the third quarter, taking overall inflow in the first nine months of the year to £11.2bn, almost double the total for 1994. The largest inward acquisitions were the purchases of Kleinwort Benson by Dresdner Bank and Warburg's investment banking operations by SBC.

Comment, above

Christmas boost for high street

NIC CICUTTI
and NIGEL COPE

Retailers were expressing cautious optimism yesterday that a rise in pre-Christmas sales compared with last year might help offset poor sales throughout the past 12 months.

Although store chains refused to give precise figures for sales in the shopping countdown to 25 December, the general picture they painted was more hopeful than last year.

Clothes retailers were one of the biggest losers earlier this year, hit by the unusually mild autumn. But there appears to be some evidence of a pick-up in trading.

Transax, Europe's largest cheque guarantee company, said a survey of authorisation requests made from a sample of 19,000 high street outlets showed the average spend was £128. Cheque authorisations have risen 3 per cent since last year. Some categories are doing significantly better, including fashion and footwear sales, up 4 per cent, and menswear with a 12 per cent rise.

The biggest improvement is in electrical stores, where average cheque values are 15 per cent up on 1994.

James May, director general at the British Retail Consortium, said: "What we are seeing in terms of figures we

receive and in anecdotal evidence is a mood of cautious optimism. Sales are up about 3-4 per cent in value terms and 1-2 per cent in volume terms. It is not a great boost but it is still a picture of modest growth."

"One thing different from last year is that there is not so much of a North-South divide. Last year, Scotland was steaming ahead. This year, things seem fairly even."

Many large out-of-town shopping centres have had a bumper festive season. Lakeside shopping centre, in Thurrock, Essex, recorded 32,000 cars entering its car park on Monday, up 12 per cent on the equivalent day last year.

"Many retailers are saying it is the best single day of week-day trading they have ever had," the centre's manager, Chris Fear, said.

Smaller items such as books, CDs and fragrances have fared well. WH Smith declined to comment on trading. However, it is thought that its Compaq multimedia PCs, which retail for between £1,099 and £1,699, have been selling well.

Sally Collinson, executive officer at Oxford Street Retailers Association in London, said business was up between 5 and 10 per cent in all stores, boosted by tourist trade. "People are not throwing their hands up in the air but they are happy enough."

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business

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

Outlook brightens for property

A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since the capital profits made in the property market were the principal topics of dinner party conversations from Canary Wharf to John O'Grada. Bricks and mortar are no longer the best investments millions of aspiring capitalists have ever made. House prices are less volatile than share prices but houses have dropped in value or simply stagnated for six years now.

Since 1983 the FT-SE All Share index has climbed from the low 400s to 1,800, and even the Great Crash of 1987 - when share prices fell by 30 per cent in a matter of days - now looks less alarming in the context of the overall upward trend.

Meanwhile Halifax Building Society's index of UK house prices stood at 198.9 last month, down 15 per cent from the 1989 peak. Overall, prices have no more than stagnated since the index was rebased in 1983.

To put matters in perspective the retail price index has risen 72 per cent over the same period, which leaves property still out-performing the index since 1983. But it has been an investment disaster on a massive scale over the second half of the period.

Even that is an over-simplification, however, because the fall since 1989 was almost entirely concentrated in the period 1989-92. Since then price trends have been almost entirely flat.

The point has now been emphatically made that there is nothing magical about the property market that allows it to ignore the principles of value - actual and perceived - which underlie all other investments.

It therefore follows that house prices are as much a cyclical phenomenon as any other asset, and property can be under-valued as well as over-valued.

The price of property relative to national earnings has indeed fallen back from a peak of five times to little more than three times, which is right at the bottom end of the historical range.

The incipient recovery in property prices in 1995 was choked off by an upturn in interest rates, an increase in job insecurity and the rises in personal taxation announced in the budgets of 1993 and 1994.

But that setback strengthens the case for a modest recovery in housing turnover and property values in 1996 when the latest mortgage reductions take effect - and the tax cuts announced last month find their way into buyers' pockets.

The balance of supply and demand also favours a recovery in property prices. New house building is still depressed, construction costs have

already been squeezed to the bone by recession, and it is visibly cheaper to buy accommodation of the same quality and location than it is to rent.

The experts are cautiously optimistic. Halifax, for example, is forecasting a modest 2 per cent rise in prices and a 10 per cent increase in turnover in the coming year. John Charcol, a leading firm of mortgage advisers, is expecting a 3 per cent rise in prices on an 8 per cent increase in turnover.

Not enough, perhaps, to start a buying boom - or even lift more than a handful out of negative equity. But 1996 could arguably be the best year since 1989 for bricks and mortar.

Redland still has bounce

There is a price at which anything is for sale and, having slumped from an already sharply discounted flotation price of 65p in June 1994 to just 20p, Ennemix, despite its well-documented problems, has probably reached it.

That said, it is hard to see why Redland, one of the giants of the building materials sector, is bothering with a ready-made concrete and aggregates group worth less than £4m. With Ennemix warning shareholders to sit on

their hands it is not immediately apparent that the deal is worth the management time.

In the three years before it came to the market, Ennemix lost more than £8m.

Despite that it persuaded shareholders to stump up £4.5m when floated, most of which has been poured down the drain. The problems since then have been legion.

One manager successfully claimed constructive dismissal, other directors took pay cuts, the dividend was passed and Nottinghamshire County Council blocked a proposal to extend one of the company's key quarries. The shares slipped to half Ennemix's net asset value (hence their attraction to Redland) before bouncing 15p to 35p after Redland picked up 29.9 per cent of the equity.

The deal is irrelevant to Redland in investment terms, which will come as little relief to anyone who followed the New Year tips of our sister Sunday paper a year ago. Redland shares have been atrocious performers partly thanks to dismal trading in the company's main markets but mainly because of the decision to cut the dividend early in the year.

The decline until last month was relentless but, just pennies from the low reached by the shares in 1992, the construction sector's bleak hour, they suddenly turned the corner and from

a low of 326p have bounced to 384p, up 2p yesterday. At that level they trade on a prospective price/earnings ratio of only about 10 next year, a sizeable discount to the rest of the market, which is not too unreasonable given Redland's exposure to the fast declining west German housing market.

With a yield of 5.5 per cent, however, and signs of an upturn in housing at home, the bounce has a way still to go.

Biotech babe on the bandwagon

Large and small, biotechnology stocks are jumping on the bandwagon created by the recent surge in British Biotech shares. Yesterday it was the turn of KS Biomedix, a tiny group brought to the new Alternative Investment Market in October.

The group is raising £3.82m to further research on three of its most interesting drugs and help shore up a balance sheet which in May was hit by a £1.04m deficit on the profit and loss account. The placing and open offer through mini-merchant bank English Trust is being offered to existing shareholders on a one-for-15 basis at 90p a share.

The company's best near-term prospect is a treatment for rheumatoid arthritis, which has shown promising results in human trials. Of 33 patients who used the drug, 76 per cent showed an improvement that lasted from one to nearly three years in individual cases. The second-phase trials begin next year and if KSB can do a licensing deal with a big pharmaceutical group in 1997, the drug could be on the market by the following year.

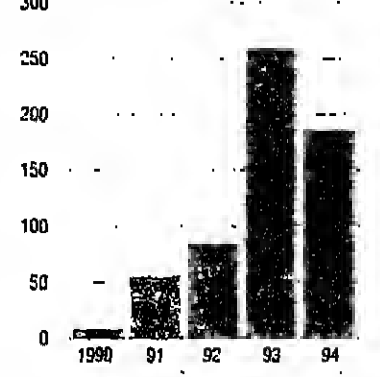
With an osteoarthritis drug also under development, KSB would be attacking a combined market currently worth around \$6bn world-wide if it is successful. In its favour, both the "new" compounds are actually one or more old drugs already approved for use against different ailments, thus allowing what is usually a long-winded approval process to be circumvented to some extent.

KSB is also developing what could be an interesting line in monoclonal antibodies developed in sheep, claimed to be a more effective way of delivering anti-cancer drugs than existing methods. But it is up against formidable opposition from others attacking the same markets with novel compounds. The market is thin, with founder Dr Kim Tso sitting on 70 per cent of the equity after the placing, and the shares, up 7p to 108p, remain speculative.

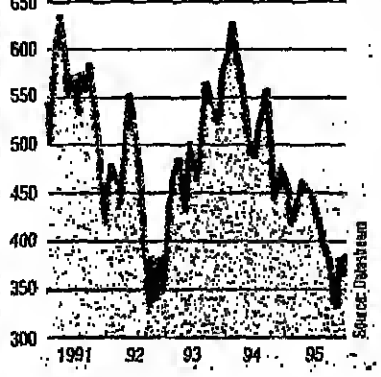
Redland: at a glance

Trading record	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Market value (£2.00bn, share price 385p)					
Pre-tax profits (£m)	186	199	279	373	380
Dividends per share (pence)	25.0	25.0	25.0	19.4	18.7

Free cash flow



Share price



Simon Pincombe CITY DIARY

Shell could be in for a lecture from Ms Roddick

Shell may not be off the hook yet over the Keo Saro-Wiwa affair. The London Business School has announced that the first two lectures in its 1996 Stockton series will be given by the alarming combination of King Hussein of Jordan and Anita Roddick (in that order).

Both speakers will address the theme of "Resolving International Conflict: What role for business?". The Jordanian monarch's thoughts on the subject are not yet widely known. But it will undoubtedly afford the redoubtable Body Shop chief executive the opportunity for some self-righteous table thumping as she warns of the evils of "transnational corporations" (very much a 1996 buzzword, this) moving capital around the world in search of low wages.

Shell, which has ignored demands not to invest in Nigeria following the murder of the Ogoni dissident, can expect no mercy. As you might expect The Body Shop was very much on the Saro-Wiwa case. Ms Roddick's husband, Gordon, even went to South Africa to plead with Nelson Mandela.

For those of a more nervous disposition, there will be a glass of sherry before the lecture.

Yesterday's £3.5m placing by KS Biomedix, pioneers of radical cancer treatments, reopened old wounds for Martin Myerscough. The prospectus published in October (when the company was floated on the Alternative Investment Market) shows the finance director to have been convicted of a road traffic offence.

Nothing too serious, you understand. It seems the former tax accountant at Arthur Andersen cycled through a set of red lights in 1992.

The customer research arm of Next offers the following data for your digestion. Christmas costs the average consumer between £250 and £499; it will take 40 per cent of the population up to two months to pay off their Christmas debts; it will take 3 per cent of the population up to six months to clear the bills; it is a myth that the Scots are a thrifty race - they are more likely to overspend at Christmas than Londoners; Deck the halls.



On the case: Table-thumping opportunity for Anita Roddick

his way to work - only to be nicked by the nation's finest. The result was a £10 fine. But the conviction is a source of never-ending amusement to Dr Kim Tso Tan, the managing director, who likes to dine out on the fact that he has a criminal on his board.

Some advice for the Princess of Wales now that she has finally been given her marching orders. As luck would have it, Macmillan Publishers have sent an advance copy of *The Finance of Divorce*, which provides some useful tips for the People's Ambassador.

On the question of maintenance it seems Diana must strike quickly if she is to ensure an adequate income for herself. "When it comes to calculating the wife's needs, these will inevitably be deter-

mined by reference to her spending pattern during the period of separation," notes Peter Vaines, the author. "Where the amounts at stake are significant ... it may not be in her interests to adopt a frugal lifestyle."

Quite so. But what is good for the royal goose is good for the royal gander. The book points out that the husband too will need to establish a mean spending pattern and could suddenly take up "expensive hobbies such as flying and hunting".

And finally, Our short series on great businessmen and their varied philosophies ends with the thoughts of Sir Simon Hornby, chairman of WH Smith. You will recall that Sir Simon is one of the captains of industry that have been persuaded to disperse pearls of wisdom to 18-year-old school leavers.

"Have fun," advises the retailer. "Make work fun for you and your colleagues. Keep a diary (presumably a WH Smith diary) and never throw away theatre or opera tickets. Invaluable stuff and no mistake."

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Z-D8300M Midi Hi-Fi System
LCX-500 Micro Hi-Fi System
HV-FX77 VCR
XP-R600 Personal CD Player

Second Prize
NSX-999 Mini Hi-Fi System
HS-RX848 Personal Stereo Tape Model
HV-FX77 VCR

Third Prize
LCX-500 Micro Hi-Fi System
HS-RX848 Personal Stereo Tape Model
HV-FX77 VCR

Fourth prize
LCX-500 Micro Hi-Fi System
HV-FX77 VCR

Fifth Prize
LCX-500 Micro Hi-Fi System
XP-R600 Personal CD Player

Runners-up
LCX-500 Micro Hi-Fi System

These great Aiwa prizes take home entertainment to new heights of enjoyment. Here is a brief description of each component prize.

The Z-D8300M Midi Hi-Fi System incorporates a Dolby Pro Logic speaker system and 5-CD auto changer. It has five speakers with ample power output, 3-band tuner, graphic equaliser, double auto-reverse cassette deck and belt-drive automatic turntable.

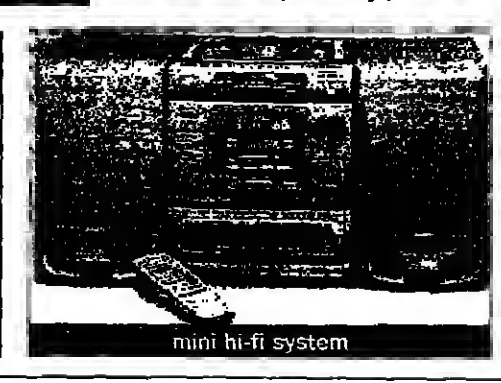
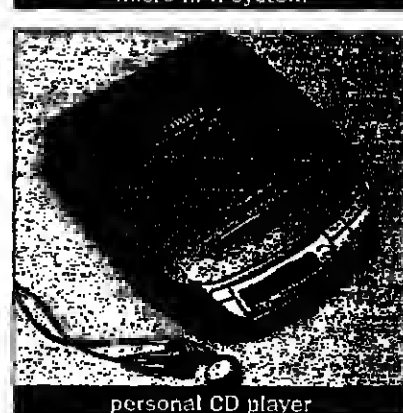
The compact size of the LCX-500 Micro Hi-Fi System belies the quality of its sound. This versatile system comprises 10W+10W amplifier, 3-band tuner, top-loading CD player, cassette deck and speakers.

The HV-FX77 VCR is packed with features that make recording and playing so simple that even adults can do it. It has four heads for increased picture clarity, VideoPlus for ease of programming and a one-month, six event timer programme.

For music on the move, the lightweight XP-R600 Personal CD Player offers great CD sound plus a digital synthesiser tuner with 30 pre-set bands. The NSX-999 Mini Hi-Fi System is built around a powerful 150W+150W amplifier linked to a tuner, 3-CD auto changer CD player, and a double auto-reverse cassette deck. The speaker system features 3-way bass reflex.

The HS-RX848 Personal Stereo Tape Model offers full remote control with a digital tuner and one-key joystick operation.

How To Enter: To be in with a chance of winning one of the prize packages listed above, you must collect four differently numbered tokens from the seven that we are printing this week. Today we give you Token Six. The entry form, which was published on Wednesday, will be reprinted in tomorrow's Independent along with the last token, Token Seven. Rules as previously published.



Courtaulds sells vinyl tiles firm

TOM STEVENSON
Deputy City Editor

The reshaping of Courtaulds contigued yesterday as the chemicals company that recently announced the departures of both its chairman and chief executive disposed of Amtico, the vinyl business whose luxury tiles grace the smartest floors.

The sale of Amtico to its management team will raise £49m for Courtaulds, which will retain a 10 per cent stake in the company, backed in the

buyout by Electra Fleming, the private equity investment firm. In the year to March, Amtico made an operating profit of £3.3m from sales of £35.2m. It had net assets at that time of £25.4m.

Eryl Morris, Courtaulds' deputy chief executive, said: "This is good for Amtico and good for Courtaulds. Our strategy is to focus on core businesses where the group has particular strength internationally. Amtico is an excellent business but it is not core to Courtaulds' activities."

Amtico designs, manufactures and markets a range of high quality floor tiles from its Coventry headquarters and has a string of showrooms in the UK and abroad. The UK and Germany are its largest markets although it sells into 26 countries.

The sale of Amtico is the latest move in a turbulent month for Courtaulds, which saw its profits slide 16 per cent in the six months to September from £81m to £68m as galloping raw material prices wreaked havoc with the company's ability to price profitably.

A tripling of the price of acrylonitrile, from which acrylic yarn is made, and a doubling of wood pulp caused a slump in profits from fibres and chemicals, one of Courtaulds' main divisions. That took the shine off results from the rest of the business, which came in ahead of analysts' expectations.

The results were followed a week later by the unexpected announcement of the joint departures of Sir Christopher Hogg, chairman for 15 years, and Sipko Huismans, chief executive for five years.

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market report/shares

TAKING STOCK

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year



B for British sparkle signals belated festive upturn

Hopes are rising that the stock market will, if somewhat belatedly, experience another rip roaring festive upsurge.

Steve Wright at Barclays de Zoete Wedd said: "As long as there are no US budget shocks we should see further UK strength."

The FT-SE 100 index rose 19.6 points to 3633.3, a two day gain of 56.4 points. It is 47.1 below its peak, hit at the start of the month.

The feeling is strengthening another interest rate cut will occur early in the new year. The base rate reduction to 6.5 per cent, announced last week, was seen by many observers as the first part of a half-a-point move. With the US and Germany following the UK example, the scene is set for the Chancellor to deliver the second half.

New York played a significant part in Wednesday's rally. Its late overnight slump

created a few shudders in early trading but rate hopes and the feeling Wall Street's sudden decline was little more than a short term aberration soon encouraged shares to move ahead.

British, for once, was a rewarding prefix. A return of GEC takeover speculation, thoughts about the proposed Orange mobile telephones flotation and ABN Amro Hoare Govett support combined to lift the shares 21p to 779p, against an 835p peak.

Although GEC is thought to have left it too late to capture BAE (once British Aerospace) the rumour continues to go the rounds. BAE's escape from GEC will be underlined by the Orange share sale. Likely to value the company at more than £2bn, BAE has 30 per cent of Orange.

British Gas and British Steel were others in demand; so was British Telecom, (better known

these days as BT). Shares of British Gas flared a further 7.5p to 237.5p. BS recovered 3p to 154p and BT edged ahead 5p to 351.5p.

Rolls-Royce, with John Rose named as new chief executive, was the best performing blue chip, up 8.5p to 185p.

Racal Electronics gained 5p to 283p as it was named Henderson Crosthwaite's share of the year.

Henderson's Brian Newman is encouraged by the group's £135.7m acquisition of British Rail's telecom side - and expects profits to grow from this year's forecast £72m to £130m in 1996. Braidup value is believed to be 330p a share.

Smith & Nephew, the healthcare group often boosted by takeover thoughts, failed, however, to get any seasonal cheer from Kleinwort Benson. The securities house cut its profit estimate from £175m to £167m and downgraded its advice from buy to hold. The shares fell 4p to 190.5p.

Poor trading statements took their toll. McDonnell Information Systems continued its lamentable performance, falling 24.5p to 36.5p. T Clarke, an electrical contractor, warned of a £1m loss and dropped 7p to 42p while Arcoelectric signalled lower second half profits, falling 25p to 210p.

Victrex, an ICI management

buy-out, was the star performer. Placed at 170p the shares surged to 240p in heavy turnover. The engineering company Unicorn International had a much more subdued time, at 134p still close to its placing.

Take over action created a few small pockets of excitement. Abbot, the building materials group once known as Unigrip, slipped 3p to 53p as it mounted an £8.2m offer for OIS International Inspection, up 7p to 25p.

Mid Kent, water company, splashed 77p higher following a French offer while Enamix, an aggregates group, jumped 12p to 32p following a bid from Redland, the building materials group. Redland already has a 30 per cent stake.

Independent Insurance, which is acquiring a French financial group, rose 27p to 361p.

enough to inspire its much bigger and adjacent Southern Water 27p higher to 695p. The French, it was pointed out, descended on Northumbrian Water after buying the nearby smaller water businesses.

Vaux, the brewer and hotelier, rose 18p to 275p on bid talk in a weak drinks market.

National Grid continued to disappoint, falling 1.5p to 199p as the market awaited more share sales from the electrical utilities.

The shares did touch 230p in unofficial dealings and there were hopes that with the lure of a near 6 per cent dividend yield they would quickly return to such a level once full trading started.

Hard pressed Enviromed, the health care group, has at last produced a modest pick-up. US litigation over whether it invented the technology for analysing lead in water has taken an encouraging turn with the burden of proof placed on Enviromed's opponent. With a company associated with a former director, Ron Zwaiger, continuing to build up its stake - it now has 16.1 per cent - the shares rose 4p to 25p. They were floated at 110p in the summer of 1993.

Barcom, the plant hire group revamped by company doctor Dmg Rogers, is bumping along at 35p. It returned to the black this year, making £652,000, and should continue to make sharp progress as it reaps benefits from its takeover of Chepstow, a rival plant hire business.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

Other details: ex rights x Ex dividend x Ex all x United Securities Market's Suspended x Fully Paid x Nil Paid Shares.

Source: Financial

FT-SE 100 - Real-time

UK Stock Market Report

UK Company News

Foreign Exchange

Anyone with a non-dial telephone can use the service. For a detailed description of the independent index, including its portable facility, please call 0891 233 333.

For assistance, call our helpline 071 875 4375 (9.30am - 5.30pm).

Calls cost 20p per minute (cheap rate), and 40p at all other times. Call charges include

Market leaders: Top 20 volumes

FT-SE 100 index hour by hour

Open 3602.8 down 11

11.00 3625.1 up 11.4

12.00 3625.5 up 0.5

13.00 3622.9 up 0.2

14.00 3622.2 up 0.5

15.00 3633.3 up 12.6

Close 3633.3 up 12.6

High 3633.3

Low 3602.8

Volume 1,000,000

Value £1,000,000

Turnover £1,000,000

Dividend £1,000,000

Yield 2.5%

P/E Ratio 15.0

Dividend Cover 2.0

Dividend Payout 50%

Dividend Yield 2.5%

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Dividend Yield 2.5%

Symbol	Company Name	Price	Change	Volume	Market Cap	Dividend	Yield	PE Ratio	EPS	Revenue	Profit	Assets	Liabilities	Equity	Debt	Rating	Analyst	Notes
AA	Alcoa Inc.	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAE	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAI	Alcoa Industrial	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAJ	Alcoa Japan	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAK	Alcoa Korea	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAO	Alcoa Oil	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAQ	Alcoa Quality	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAU	Alcoa Uranium	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAV	Alcoa Vanadium	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAW	Alcoa Water	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAZ	Alcoa Zinc	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B	1.00	1.00%	15.0	6.67	10.0	1.00	10.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	A	JP Morgan	Aluminum
AAA	Alcoa Aluminum	100.00	+0.50	100,000	10.0B													

FOREIGN EXCHANGE				DOLLAR				D-MARK	
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Canada	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25
Germany	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
France	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Italy	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Japan	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Belgium	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Denmark	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Netherlands	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Norway	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Spain	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Sweden	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Switzerland	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Australia	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Hong Kong	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
New Zealand	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
South Africa	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60
Singapore	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60

OTHER SPOT RATES				DOLLAR				D-MARK	
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Country	Spot
Argentina	1.60	1.60	1.60	Colombia	1.60	1.60	1.60	Costa Rica	1.60
Brazil	1.60	1.60	1.60	Cuba	1.60	1.60	1.60	Czech Republic	1.60
Canada	1.60	1.60	1.60	Dominican Republic	1.60	1.60	1.60	Ecuador	1.60
Chile	1.60	1.60	1.60	El Salvador	1.60	1.60	1.60	Guatemala	1.60
China	1.60	1.60	1.60	Honduras	1.60	1.60	1.60	India	1.60
Colombia	1.60	1.60	1.60	Indonesia	1.60	1.60	1.60	Israel	1.60
Czech Republic	1.60	1.60	1.60	Japan	1.60	1.60	1.60	Italy	1.60
Dominican Republic	1.60	1.60	1.60	Malaysia	1.60	1.60	1.60	Japan	1.60
Ecuador	1.60	1.60	1.60	Mexico	1.60	1.60	1.60	South Korea	1.60
El Salvador	1.60	1.60	1.60	Nicaragua	1.60	1.60	1.60	Sri Lanka	1.60
Guatemala	1.60	1.60	1.60	Pakistan	1.60	1.60	1.60	Taiwan	1.60
Honduras	1.60	1.60	1.60	Peru	1.60	1.60	1.60	Thailand	1.60
India	1.60	1.60	1.60	Philippines	1.60	1.60	1.60	Turkey	1.60
Indonesia	1.60	1.60	1.60	Portugal	1.60	1.60	1.60	USA	1.60
Israel	1.60	1.60	1.60	Romania	1.60	1.60	1.60	West Germany	1.60
Italy	1.60	1.60	1.60	South Africa	1.60	1.60	1.60	Yugoslavia	1.60
Japan	1.60	1.60	1.60	Spain	1.60	1.60	1.60		
Japan	1.60	1.60	1.60	Sweden	1.60	1.60	1.60		
Japan	1.60	1.60	1.60	Switzerland	1.60	1.60	1.60		
Japan	1.60	1.60	1.60	Taiwan	1.60	1.60	1.60		
Japan	1.60	1.60	1.60	Thailand	1.60	1.60	1.60		
Japan	1.60	1.60	1.60	Turkey	1.60	1.60	1.60		
Japan	1.60	1.60	1.60	USA	1.60	1.60	1.60		
Japan									

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Wordsmiths working on their skills

Sports literature is now developing into an art form, says John Roberts

Unlike dear old JR Hartley, who was reduced to ruing round trying to buy his own book on the fishing, Nick Hornby is assured of an important place in sporting literature. The author of *Fever Pitch*, the life and times of an Arsenal supporter, is widely credited with setting new standards in the mud, sweat and cheers department.

Published by Victor Gollancz in 1992, *Fever Pitch* underlined that there is a market for quality, whether the writer is directly involved in a sport, or is a passionate observer, or simply decides to study the subject.

The success of *Fever Pitch* appears to have had a profound influence on the nation's publishing houses. "Clearly, you are going to get ghosted autobiographies," says Samson, the editorial director of Little, Brown said, "but I would argue that the sports books that are really selling are now the ones where the individual voice of the author is important."

Samson's company published the latest winner of the William Hill Sports Book of the Year Award, *A Good Walk Spoiled - Days and Nights on the PGA Tour*, by the American journalist John Feinstein. "We're a trade publisher and therefore the quality of writing is the only criteria," Samson emphasised. "I think the quality in writing sports books has improved. Whether that's led by the publishers I doubt. I think it's probably consumer led. There are a lot of very well written sports books now. I would argue that they didn't exist a few years ago."

Ghosted autobiographies have filled shelves for as long as one can remember, but *The Glory Game*, Hunter Davies's close encounters with Spurs, opened up the play, and there are examples of outstanding books by lesser known footballers.

Garry Nelson, of Charlton Athletic, is currently making a name for himself with *Left Foot Forward*, which is reminiscent of Eamonn Dunphy's memorable chronicle of a player's lot at Millwall. *Only A Game*, written with Peter Ball.

"In the past," Ian Marshall, the senior editor at Headline, Nelson's publisher, said, "we have not done diary-of-a-season books, because they tend not to last very long on the shelves. Garry is not the sort of personality we would expect to be the automatic pick-up, and he was doing a book of the type we don't like normally. But, on the other hand, the book itself was so great to read that we knew it would find a market. We're now over 10,000, which is pretty good."

Headline, as the publisher of *Robbans* and *Playfair*, also know that there is an insatiable appetite for reference books. Football club histories and statistical records have also proliferated. Clubs themselves, aware of the value of copyright and merchandising, have started publishing their own official magazines and books. Instructional books appear to be one segment of the business showing signs of decline.

A number of authors publish their own material. "I think the self-publishing thing has been quite remarkable,

particularly in football, but also in rugby league," commented John Gaudard, of Sports Pages, the specialist book shop. "And we've also had the associated fanzine phenomenon," he added.

Gaudard, a New Zealander, founded Sports Pages 10 years ago - "I got sick of never being able to find the books I wanted to buy and thought there must be a few other people out there who had the same problem" - and has played a part in elevating the sports books trade.

He, in turn, considers that newspapers have also done their bit. "The media treats sport more seriously," he said. "I would suggest that if you compared the amount of space the broadsheet papers give to sport now, compared with, say, 12 years ago, I think you'd find there's more space, longer articles, and more reflections rather than just match reports. In a way we're all part of the same trend."

Gaudard knows better than to scoff at the ghosted section. "It's all too easy to assume that they're all going to be total garbage," he said. "There have been some bad ones, but people tend to take them as typical, whereas I think it's a rather more mixed picture than that. I have been rude about them myself over the years, but what I'm increasingly aware of is that for a lot of fans out there, who really revere the player, the information they're going to get is exactly what they want."

What constitutes a financial success can vary. According to Gaudard: "It's that wonderful, rather arcane balance between the cost of the production, the cost of the paper, how nicely or how cheaply you are going to do it, and what price you put on it. You can't print much fewer than 2,000 and expect to even cover your costs, although if you're publishing little books yourself, I would imagine you could print four or five hundred and make money."

Little, Brown are confident that they have a strong contender for next year's William Hill Award: a biography of Sir Donald Bradman by Lord Charles Williams, the Labour peer, due to be published in August. *The Don*, an Australian biography by Roland Perry, is already scoring for Macmillan.

Headline will be at the crease twice in June, first with a review of Raymond Hillingworth's experiences as England's chairman and manager, by Hillingworth's Jack Bannister, and then with an authorised biography of Mike Atherton, the England captain.

Tampering with Crick, by Don Osler, the Test umpire, and Jack Bannister, is the intriguing title of a Collins/Willow offering in May.

In March, before *Euro '96*, Collins/Willow are publishing an update of the excellent *Football Grounds of Britain*, by Simon Inglis, although this may not sit comfortably alongside *Everywhere We Go*, from Headline, an account of football hooliganism by Dougie and Eddy Brimsom.

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Adrian Maguire goes overboard from Barton Bank at the final fence in last year's King George VI Chase and aims to make amends next week

Photograph: Ed Byrne

Bank return sets the pulse racing

As a rule, Jennifer Mould does not watch her best horse racing "until he's past the post", but 12 months ago she made an exception. After all, Barton Bank was full of running, a dozen lengths clear and had only one fence left to jump to win the King George VI Chase for the second year in succession. "I watched last year thinking he'd won it," Mrs Mould recalls. "I would do it again."

The painful memory of the second and entreaties which followed will return on Boxing Day, not just for Barton Bank's owner, but for any punter who witnessed them. There was the horrible mistake which unsettled Adrian Maguire, and then the jockey desperately grabbing at the reins in the forlorn hope of remounting as Alan and Monsieur Le Cure galloped past. Next, the sight of David Nicholson, Barton Bank's trainer, attempting to console Maguire out on the track as Alan's connections celebrated their unlikely success. And then, of course, there was the ugly fracas involving Nicholson

son and a photographer, for which the trainer was later called to account at Jockey Club headquarters.

For Jennifer Mould, it was the darkest moment of a thoroughly depressing season. Her star-spangled green colours have been carried with distinction for many years, most notably by Charter Party, the 1988 Gold Cup winner. Last year, though, there were just three victories, and she betrays her abiding passion for chasers by pointing out that "they were all by Tipping, Tim over hurdles". Barton Bank's season never recovered from his disaster at Kempton. His confidence had already been shipping water after an earlier mishap at Wetherby, and by the time he arrived at Cheltenham for the Gold Cup, even the captain had taken to the lifeboats. After a bad mistake at the first, a fall seemed only a matter of time, and it arrived five out, in a horrible, of birch and falling limbs.

That's him gone, many spectators thought. Even if he gets

Greg Wood on a horse trying to ease a painful Boxing Day memory for his owner

up, he'll never jump round 20 fences again. Not with his jockey still aboard, anyway. And yet, four days before this year's King George, Barton Bank is not just the 3-1 second favourite for the big race, but has already posted a very impressive, and error-free, success at Wetherby.

Much of the credit for this transformation lies with Ginny Elliott (formerly Ginny Leng), one of Britain's finest three-day eventers. Barton Bank spent his summer back at school, as Elliott used show-jumping techniques to infuse a talent for self-preservation into his reckless jumping technique. The irony with Barton Bank is that his jumping is, in fact, perfectly adequate, but he has a disturbing habit of taking off too early. If he meets a fence wrong, there can be only one result. What Elliott needed to do was persuade him to put in a short, extra stride when necessary.

"Ginny puts him over five poles in a row, to make him go in-out all the time," Mrs Mould said. "Then she'll put him over quite a big jump at the end, to make him pick his feet up and round his back as well. She's done amazingly well and it seemed to work at Wetherby, but of course there's a bit more competition on Boxing Day."

Somehow you feel that, for better or worse, Barton Bank

'Afterwards we were in shock. We woke up thinking it didn't happen but it did'

will once again be the focus of drama and emotion. A gallant but well-beaten fourth place just isn't his style. Quite apart from last year's disaster, his hard-fought victory against Bradbury Star in 1993 was also cloaked in controversy.

Both Maguire and Declan Murphy, on the runner-up, produced one of the best finishes ever seen in the King George thanks to rides of unflinching but perfectly controlled aggression. The stewards, however, disagreed, and both received suspensions for whip abuse.

Maguire accepted his punishment, but Murphy appealed to the Jockey Club - and won.

It is Maguire, the punter's champion who seems fated never to be the champion jockey, who will carry the affection of backers on Tuesday even if his mount does not carry their money. An injury earlier in the season has surely cost him the title for another year, but there was one booking he was determined not to miss, and Barton Bank's connections never doubted he would make it. "I

think he was desperate to get back," Mrs Mould said. "I don't know what we would have done otherwise and we hadn't even thought about it."

What they have thought about, inevitably, is the dreadful disappointment of 12 months ago. "Afterwards I think we were all in shock apart from anything else. We woke up thinking it didn't happen, but it did."

"Barton Bank is the worst horse we've ever had like that, he gives me such heart attacks, but to own one like him is still very special and it would be nice for him to prove himself. He's a very good-looking horse but he doesn't stand out like the grey horse, or Arkle, who had some presence, so the public doesn't recognise him, basically."

Not yet, perhaps, but what the punters like is flair and courage, with a hint of danger as well. Barton Bank has it all, and so too does the indefatigable Irishman on his back. Exorcism beckons for the ghost of Christmas past.

Cheltenham's clerk to face Club inquiry

Cheltenham's controversially late abandonment earlier this month is to be investigated by the Jockey Club's disciplinary committee. An inquiry will determine whether the acting clerk of the course, Edward Gillespie, complied with the rules of racing when the meeting was called off at the track on 9 December, Triplemint Gold Cup day.

Despite freezing conditions overnight, officials gave no warning that the fixture was in jeopardy. Some 8,000 racegoers had been admitted to the course when the abandonment was announced at 12.55pm - 35 minutes after the scheduled off-time for the delayed first race.

A Jockey Club spokesman, John Maxe, explained: "It has yet to be clarified which rules are in question, just that there is a case to answer. There are a number of instructions issued to clerks which they are asked to follow and a clerk should at all times act in a professional manner."

"The most obviously similar case was at Newcastle two years ago on Fighting Fifth Hurdle day when racing was abandoned and the clerk of the course, David Parnley, was subsequently fined £600."

The inquiry comes at a time when Gillespie is also under pressure in his other role with Epsom. A campaign, led by the BBC's racing commentator Peter O'Sullivan, is being mounted to try to persuade the track to switch the Derby slot to its traditional Wednesday slot after being staged on a Saturday this year.

Dunwoody prefers Ireland to Kempton

Richard Dunwoody, the most wanted man in racing, will go to Leopardstown on Wednesday after his important Boxing Day date with One Man.

The champion jockey is in the best form of his life and has trainers in Ireland and Britain clamouring for his services. He has passed up the opportunity to partner Ireland's Montelado in the Christmas Hurdle on Kempton's second day.

Instead, he will be in action at Leopardstown where his principal ride will be Gimme Five in the £80,000 Paddy Power Handicap Chase.

"Richard was never definitely booked for Montelado, though he was offered the ride," his agent, Robert Parsons, said. "He's a gentleman's agreement with Gimme Five's trainer, Eddie O'Grady, as J Lermont

Weather threat to Boxing Day cards

Racing goes into a brief hibernation today as horses and riders take a four-day break before resuming on Boxing Day. The weather, though, may put paid to some holiday plans with the Met office predicting a spell of cold weather on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day night.

Mark Kershaw, the secretary at Ayr - which is due to stage a Boxing Day card - and at Edinburgh - which has a Wednesday fixture - gloomily reported: "We could not have raced at either today because of frost. Although there is a thaw predicted for the weekend, the weather is due to turn colder again around Christmas Eve. We are going to have to wait until Sunday before looking again."

Charlie Moore, the man in the hot seat at Market Rasen, said: "The track is raceable at the moment and we have had a good day. However, the weather is taking the precaution of applying straw to the take-off sides of the fences and hurdles and sheeting to the landing sides. To combat forecast frost One holiday-season switch is scheduled for the improving Lo Stregone, who will miss the Welsh National on Wednesday to test the mettle of Jodami in Wetherby's Rowland Meyrick Chase the previous day."

"We don't think that he will be suited by a slopping match at Chepstow," his trainer, Tom Tate, said of the horse that beat Unguided Missile last time. "He has improved this season and I can only put it down to the fact that he had a bone out in a fetlock joint last season."

twice aboard another grey, Desert Orchid. The Rowland Meyrick Handicap Chase at Wetherby is one of the north's leading steeplechases and Market Rasen will run the Lincolnshire National over four miles one furlong. The other five meetings always attempt to have above-average fields for the day. The following day, Chepstow will be the main event, offering the King George VI Chase, a race that ranks second in the Christmas Festival season, to the Cheltenham Gold Cup. The big jumping One Man is the favourite, with the champion jockey, Richard Dunwoody, booked for the ride, and Dunwoody has won this race

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PICK OF THE DAY

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY RACING
National Hunt Meeting
Kempton and Chepstow

The 10 meetings on Boxing Day provide plenty of choice and a feast of National Hunt racing. Kempton Park is the main meeting, offering the King George VI Chase, a race that ranks second in the Christmas Festival season, to the Cheltenham Gold Cup. The big jumping One Man is the favourite, with the champion jockey, Richard Dunwoody, booked for the ride, and Dunwoody has won this race

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JUST THE TICKET

a weekly guide to what's on where for the sporting spectator

12.30: 1. OLDHILL WOOD (in Barn) 54. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 5. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 10. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 11. 10. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 12. 11. 10. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 13. 12. 11. 10. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 14. 13. 12. 11. 10. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 15. 14. 13. 12. 11. 10. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 16. 15. 14. 13. 12. 11. 10. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. New Forest 7-4 (in Barn) 54. 17. 16. 15. 14. 13. 12. 11. 10. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. 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sport

Jones at his happiest with birds and nuts

Vinnie Jones is the self-styled hard man of British football, with the haircut, the demeanour and the disciplinary record. Or so it seems. The footballer captured for posterity with his hand on Paul Gascoigne's testicles, with Gazza screaming silently from that poster on the adolescent's wall. The footballer who revealed a few tricks of dirty play in the video *Soccer's Dirty Men* and got a £20,000 fine from the Football Association for his trouble.

However, the former Arsenal manager, Don Howe, has said that Vinnie is a Jekyll and Hyde character. Jones was invited to lecture at Eton. 'Vinnie's Eton boozing song', quipped one newspaper. He has also addressed the Oxford Union. Such invitations suggest that there may indeed be another side to 'The Chopper', as he is known at Wimbledon.

Furthermore, there are many in the game who simply describe him as a 'diamond geezer'. So how do the different facets of the personality of this former hard carrier hang together, if at all? I drove up a long winding road in Hertfordshire to interview him. His bungalow is up a dirt track at the end of a lane which passes over the M1 in all its commuter rush-hour glory. The house, with its swimming pool and dog kennels, is isolated, but not that far, it was noticed, from a council estate.

His hard-man image was the first topic. Did he see himself as a hard man? 'Well, I don't know how you define the word "hard man". Certainly there are tough players that give a 100 per cent. I think it's the media that give you the labels. I see myself as a tough all-rounder.'

Trying a slightly less direct approach, I asked him whether there were players in the Football League whom he considered 'hard'. He was sticking to his guns. 'There are players who I think are tougher than others. The game is getting less physical, contact-wise, these days. It's changing all the time. But I think the crowd still like to see the 50-50 tackles. The referees are under instructions to have no grey areas, so they're under the cosh a little bit. I feel sorry for referees because their hands are tied. If you mis-timed a tackle two years ago the referee would have said one more, but now it's a straight booking. Personally, I like people that give a 100 per cent.'

'The main part of my game is fitness and getting round the pitch and closing people down and getting on to the loose balls. When that's your job, especially at Wimbledon, you're going to have to stick out a leg and you know you're going to maybe get a bit of whack. But there are some players that are not going to put their foot in and get a whack. It's something I've always been prepared to do.'

We discussed a well-known quote of his: 'At the end of the day, who would you rather have in the trenches with you: Gary

Geoffrey Beattie talks to the talismanic Wimbledon footballer who sees himself as a chat-show host when his playing days are over

Lineker or Vinnie Jones?' He was asked to elaborate.

'That was after an article Gary done, saying he would rather watch Cee-fax than Wimbledon, so my way to sum him up was to say who would people rather have on their side: a 100 per cent guy like me or Mr Nice Guy?' But what about this metaphor of the trenches? Was this a natural way of talking about football?

'This way of talking really comes from the managers, who always say, when the shit hits the fan, you gotta dig in and you gotta get points, and managers want players that are going to put their life on the line. All managers are trying to do is give you a buzz, and get you in the right frame of mind for the game, to get you hyped up. Dave Bassett used to get me over hyped up. He used to take us down to an army camp and used to work on team spirit - we'd do cross-country runs with a great big log and you'd be in teams of

six and whoever got over the course quickest won - some of the lads were knackered and they couldn't carry it no more. I would always emerge as one of the leaders. I've always been a leader, even in the school playground - I was always the one with the ball. I always organised the football matches. I think the main quality of a good leader is honesty - if you go three or four nil down, you have to keep the others going and keep giving good encouragement, not slagging them off.'

We turned to his disciplinary record: his 10 red and 42 yellow cards. Did he feel that this was justified? 'I just think that referees don't give me the same sort of leeway that they do some other players - the minute I do something, it's terrible, and if other players do it, it's not so terrible.'

He was reminded of his quickest yellow card: five seconds against Manchester City. I asked him to talk me through it. 'Peter Reid had the ball, and he had a bad touch on the ball, and it was wet and I was roaring in. I just committed myself 100 per cent. I couldn't stop. I couldn't get out of the way or anything. I missed the ball completely, and just upended him, just clattered into him. All these things are split-second decisions. It doesn't matter who it was, they couldn't

have got out of it. Later on in the game there was another tackle and I just got sent off.'

What kind of instructions does he get before a game? 'I had instructions from Bobby Gould a few years ago to mark Gazza, because he just made Newcastle tick. We didn't want to get the ball and have time on it and be spraying it about and bringing other people into the game, so every time he got the ball there had to be a challenge on him. The same in the Cup final, we done the job with Dennis Wise and that helps us win.'

So what about that famous photograph with Gascoigne. 'Yeah, it makes me smile a bit, because there was nothing evil in it. Gazza was having a bit of a crack and I was having a bit of crack and one lucky photographer got the picture. There was nothing serious in it. He was tugging at my shirt and that was my reaction.'

What is it like to be sent off then? What goes through your head at the time? 'Most times when you get sent off it's in the heat of the moment - you just feel, maybe, lost a bit. Just lost.'

Jones has been described as a professional common man. I asked him about his friends now that he is a celebrity. 'For a while I hung out with Fash [John Fashanu] and Nigel Benn, but I just thought that this wasn't me. I needed to get back to my roots. I ran back to the local pub. I'm still very close to the guys I grew up with.'

'We grew up in the London overspill - in a big council estate. I was in with all the boys. It was a hard part of my life when all the boys started splitting up with girlfriends. One of the reasons that I like football is because you stay in the game. The only thing that I regret is that I didn't join the army. I would have liked the camaraderie there as well. I like being with the lads. I help the lads out with money at Christmas. Some of them are struggling. When we were growing up we were taught that the No 1 thing was to look after your mates. That's what I'm still trying to do, but they always pay back.'

What about his background? 'I started as a hod carrier working with my dad. I also started shooting with my dad. I had my first shot when I was five. I was fully employed as a gamekeeper, when I left school at 15. They gave me a year off school on permanent work experience - on the building with my dad, but then I started as a gamekeeper. I wasn't expelled from school as the papers say, I left for work experience. I switched off very quickly from things that I'm not interested in - I couldn't sit in a classroom and take in all that stuff. At 16 I was rearing pheasants from eggs and hatching them and bringing them up and releasing them into the

woods. I was in charge of £10,000-worth of incubators. I'm intelligent that way. But I didn't like schoolwork. I can't read a book. I've never read a book in my life - I haven't got the patience to do it. I have one book called *More Tales of Old Gamekeepers* - I can read these tales because they're short. But with other books, forget it. I'd rather wait until the book comes out on video.'

The one book that he seemed to have read was an intriguing subject - why was it a book about wildlife? 'Because I love wildlife. I've got a hundred wildlife videos - I can sit and watch them. There's a great programme on Christmas Eve about the red deer in Scotland. I could sit and watch that for 10 hours.'

'But what's so fascinating about wildlife?' Like one of Vinnie's tackles, this question was out before I could do anything about it. Vinnie got a little agitated. 'I don't know. What's so fascinating about your job, then, as a psychologist?'

'Because people are more interesting than animals?'

'No, they're not! Never in a million years! People are very predictable. Animals aren't. I put the bag of nuts out there for the birds and it was fascinating to see how many birds came to feed there in the hour and watch all their little ways. The great bit barges the little blue tit off. It's very dominant. Then the grey squirrel will come along and they're all gone. I sit at the window with a cup of tea in my hand and watch the bag of nuts rather than *Home and Away*.

If he had not been a footballer, what would he have liked to have done? 'I'd have been a gamekeeper without a doubt. My best friend is a gamekeeper and I'm down there all the time. I've got 16 guns - about 50 grand worth.'

He was asked about his future - particularly pertinent now that he has said publicly that he intends to leave Wimbledon. 'My career has been like the migrating woodcock,



Vinnie Jones: The 'Welsh dragon' completa with tattoo Photograph: Professional Sport

really. You never know what's in front of you. You've got all the shooters and the storms in front of you trying to whack you down, but in the end you just want to get to new fields. I want to leave Wimbledon, because I feel I need a new challenge. I miss the clubs with lots of fans. In the longer term, I think that I've got what it takes to be a good manager. I love being with the lads - all the crack, all the mickey-taking. I love all that. Or I could start my own game farm. Plus I'd like my own chat show one day. I'd like to be the new Wogan. I'd like to do the younger stars on my chat show. Wogan did all the old ones. I'd like to see how the new generation of stars cope with Vinnie Jones. In real life.'

Geoffrey Beattie is professor of psychology at Manchester University. His series of interviews with leading sports personalities, *Head to Head*, continues with Vinnie Jones on Radio 5 Live at 8.05pm on Sunday.

Cash setback for Collymore

Football

Frank Clark, the Nottingham Forest manager, yesterday insisted justice had been done after Stan Collymore's attempt to win a £400,000-plus claim against his former club was thrown out by the Premier League.

Collymore, 24, maintained he was entitled to five per cent of the British-record £8.5m fee Liverpool paid when he left Forest, declaring the payment was due because he had not requested a transfer.

The FA Premier League board was not 'persuaded' by Collymore's version of events and that Forest were therefore not obliged to pay out. However, Forest have been instructed to pay an outstanding signing-on fee of £150,000 agreed when Collymore moved from Southend for £2.2m in June 1993.

Forest insisted the striker had engineered his transfer to Liverpool, even though a formal request was never put in writing. 'I don't think it's a case of being happy,' Clark said. 'Justice has been done. There are no winners and no losers.'

Sheffield Wednesday are set to offer Chris Waddle a new contract, but are unlikely to grant his wish of a free transfer unless they are forced to do so in the wake of the Bosman case.

The 35-year-old winger, whose current deal ends this summer, has said he cannot see himself remaining at Hillsborough next season.

'We have a duty to our supporters either to offer him a new contract, which we are likely to do, or seek the compensation to which we are entitled if he leaves,' David Pleat, the

Wednesday manager said. 'What we can't lose sight of is a club is that Celtic offered us £850,000 for him less than 12 weeks ago.'

Pleat will be watching the case of Roddy Orlysson, who could be the first player to move for nothing in post-Bosman Britain.

Orlysson has signed for Oldham after rejecting a contract at Stoke and the £400,000-rated midfielder may go for nothing. Oldham have offered £100,000, but the Football League tribunal has been put back to 9 January by which time there will be a clear ruling from UEFA about 'free agents'.

Manchester United could soon have another Frenchman on their books if their manager, Alex Ferguson, can persuade William Plessier to leave Bordeaux in a £1m move. The 27-year-old centre-half has been a trial in United's reserves and is a friend of Eric Cantona from their days at Auxerre.

Mark McGhee is set to complete his first purchase as Wolves manager today by paying QPR £1m for Simon Osmond. McGhee, who brought Everton's Vinnie Sawyers in on loan yesterday, is also trying to sign Alen Michailichenko from Rangers for £500,000.

Mark Patterson will leave Bolton today in a swap deal with Sheffield United's Nathan Blake. The midfielder is valued at £300,000, with Bolton paying an extra £700,000 for the 23-year-old striker Blake.

Ian Wright is to be questioned by the Football Association over comments he made about referees. Wright is alleged to have claimed 'Arsenal Clubcall that all referees were "incompetent at the moment".'

Bold new venture for non-League players

Non-League notebook

RUPERT METCALF

The semi-professional footballing fraternity has had some good news this month with the launch of the Non-League Professionals' Association, an organisation which aims to match the service the Professional Footballers' Association provides to the full-time game.

The new body has been launched by Keith Williams, once a player with St Albans, Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamstead and a director of St Albans, but more recently a radio commentator. He has been involved in semi-professional football for over 30 years. 'The NFLPA does a splendid job for full-time players but they are not geared to cater for the non-League game,' Williams said yesterday. 'We aim to fill that gap.'

The NFLPA provides insurance services, legal advice and financial planning guidance - and it has a large market to tap into. 'More people are involved in non-League football than watch Premiership football every weekend,' Williams said. 'We have had a lot of interest from the clubs that we have approached so far. As soon as they realise that we are not a trade union trying to get involved in contract negotiations, they want to get involved.'

Merthyr Tydfil, the Welsh

club who have so far firmly resisted the idea of joining the League of Wales, show no signs of changing their mind despite a change of ownership. Ken Gunter and Barry Ebdon, partners in a security firm, have bought out the long-serving chairman John Reddy, and intend to back the club's quest to gain promotion from the Beazer Homes League back to the GM Vauxhall Conference.

Gunter and Ebdon have paid Reddy only £20,000 for his shareholding, but the departing chairman is settling Merthyr's debts. The new regime will assume responsibility for the club's loan repayments. Gunter, a long-term supporter of the Penydarren Park team, is due to replace Reddy in the chair.

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The number of years since Atletico Madrid, the Spanish League team, were last at the top of the division at Christmas time. On Wednesday they beat the fourth-placed team, Compostela, 3-0 to move four points clear.

Restaurants for the restoration of rugby's reputation

It's your wife's birthday. To make up for all those Saturdays when you've disappeared at first light with your mates and returned in the early hours slunked with beer, wearing someone else's shoes and singing hawdy songs, you decide to take her out for a special lunch. How will she take it when you tell her that you're going to a restaurant run by an ex-rugby player?

I know how mine reacted - and she didn't say 'Terrible! I've always wanted to join in the chorus of If I were the Marrying Kind'. Even telling her that she would meet one of the greatest players ever to don a Lions shirt did nothing to quell her fears that she would be tucking into double cod and chips, drinking pints of draught beer and watching me do stupid things with my underpants.

It came as quite a surprise to her that the fish was steamed and served with a saffron sauce rather than fried in batter; that the potatoes had been turned into *pallatos* rather than chips; and that mine host was a genial old buffer who didn't swear once. Some months later, I discovered another former England star was running a restaurant only a few miles from my home. She took little persuading to try it out. And very nice it was too.

Both Jeff Butterfield and Dickie Jeeps are still surprised



KEITH ELLIOTT at large

to find themselves as restaurateurs after successful international rugby careers in the 1950s and early 1960s. Their idea of a pre-match meal was an omelette (Jeeps) or two eggs in sherry (Butterfield). But life after rugby didn't leave you with many choices then. Jeeps ran a Cambridgeshire fruit farm and spent seven years as chairman of the Sports Council, while Butterfield worked as a PE teacher, plastic coatings salesman and a property developer. Former Northampton players, they find themselves back in the same game more than 30 years on.

Jeeps, 64, was one of the greatest scrum-halves ever to grace the game: tough, resourceful and a superb pack manipulator. He played 24 internationals, 13 as captain, while Butterfield, a legendary



Jeff Butterfield, the former England centre, at the Rugby Club of London, which he runs

Photograph: David Ashdown

centre, earned 28 caps back in the days when there were only four internationals a year. But whereas Butterfield's life is still rugby (he runs the Rugby Club of London), Jeeps's restaurant, Stock's, bears few reminders that diners are in the presence of one of the game's greats.

'Will Carling was right about old farts,' he says. 'The rugby union committee needs more former internationals, not ex-businessmen. I don't talk rugby to many people. When they ask, I say, That was 100 years ago, and walk away. It's boring to hear us going on about our memories.'

Maybe, but with some slight prompting, Jeeps relaxes and talks with enthusiasm about great games and names. Modern rugby leaves him underwhelmed. 'I even missed the Varsity match because some customers stayed until 3.30pm. I went upstairs to watch it, but fell asleep.'

'We ran the ball wide at every opportunity. The rules haven't changed; they just don't do it now. They make the game so complicated these days. I always remember Cliff Morgan, who taught me lots of things, saying, "Scrum-half to fly-half". It's such a simple lesson.'

Much of his enmity is shared by Butterfield, who says: 'England keep saying they will play this "expensive game". But their first thought is not the wing three-quarter. My first objective was to pass the ball to the wings. It's no good having an Underwood and not giving him the ball. If you run straight and give the winger room, he has 15 yards and room to beat a "drift defence" because people just run sideways.'

Butterfield's catching ability was legendary (he even caught one pass behind his back in an international). 'They say you never dropped the ball,' I tell him. 'Well, maybe once or twice, but not very often. Today they pass into space rather than to the man.'

This makes them sound like moaning old men, yearning for yesterday. But both are acutely aware that it really wasn't the game's finest hour. 'Ball retention is better than ever; it was training is vastly improved and technically it is a lot better,' Jeeps admits.

Butterfield's club in London's Hallam Street is a shrine to the game, with videos showing all the time; shirts, ties, cigarette cards, limited edition prints and the great photos surround you. He runs hospitably trips to all the major games and even organises

'Golden Oldie' tours. It is 23 years since his blood with five other men in the Cricketers Club, and agreed that rugby needed a place for enthusiasts 'to meet, eat and drink', though he never expected that he would be running it.

At 66 Butterfield still looks fit. He swims every day and hasn't put on any weight since his playing days. He had his hip replaced four times but claims this is more due to arthritis than injury of the joints. Jeeps has added a few pounds, but puts that down to recovering after cancer of the colon.

The pair still keep in touch, though Jeeps has no interest in 'Golden Oldies' rugby, which is Butterfield's passion. 'I took a team to New Zealand last year to a tournament where there were 190-odd teams, and I had a man in my side who was 94, so there's still plenty of time for me to take the game up seriously again,' Butterfield says, out of earshot of his wife.

Retirement isn't on either of their agendas and they still retain the spirit that characterised their play. Recently Jeeps took a booking at his restaurant for more than 40 'WI' members, only to discover that it was Butterfield and his cronies paying a surprise visit. 'I suppose I should have realised when they asked if there was draught beer,' he said.

